



FÉLIX
RAVAISSON

OF
HABIT

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OF HABIT

Félix Ravaisson

Preface by Catherine Malabou

Translation, Introduction and Commentary by
Clare Carlisle and Mark Sinclair



Continuum International Publishing Group

The Tower Building

11 York Road

London

SE1 7NX

www.continuumbooks.com

80 Maiden Lane

Suite 704

New York

NY 10038

Translation, Introduction and Commentary © Clare Carlisle and Mark Sinclair, 2008

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN-10: HB: 1-8470-6197-4

PB: 1-8470-6198-2

ISBN-13: HB: 978-1-8470-6197-3

PB: 978-1-8470-6198-0

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Ravaisson, Félix, 1813–1900.

[De l'habitude. English]

Of habit / Felix Ravaisson ; translated by Clare Carlisle and Mark Sinclair.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references (p.) and index.

ISBN 978-1-84706-197-3 — ISBN 978-1-84706-198-0 1. Habit (Philosophy) I. Title.

B2337.D4513 2008

128'.4—dc22

2008011730

Typeset by Servis Filmsetting Ltd, Stockport, Cheshire

Printed and bound in Great Britain by MPG Books Ltd, Bodmin, Cornwall

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Addiction and Grace: Preface to Félix Ravaisson's *Of Habit*

by Catherine Malabou

There are, in the European philosophical tradition, two basic ways of speaking of habit. Initiated by Aristotle, continued by Hegel and taken up by a certain current of French philosophy (Maine de Biran, Ravaisson, Bergson), the first sees in habit a primary ontological phenomenon. For beings subject to change, habit is the law of being. Without a general and permanent disposition, a 'virtue', which is developed as a result of change, as resistance to this change, the finite being cannot endure, would not have time to live. For such a being, being is fused with the habit of being. The second way, initiated by Descartes and continued by Kant, sees in habit the epitome of inauthenticity, a simulacrum of being, an imitation of virtue. Pure mechanism, routine process, devitalization of sense, habit is the disease of repetition that threatens the freshness of thought and stifles the voice, repeatable but never stale, of the categorical imperative.

Are not we ourselves, philosophers of today, habituated to this second sense of habit? Who amongst us would accept immediately the definition of habit proposed by Ravaisson at the very beginning of his text: 'Habit, in the widest sense, is a general and permanent way of being, the state of an existence considered either as the unity of its elements, or as the succession of its different phases'? Does habit not rather characterize existence at its worst: its automatisms, its abdication in the face of the new, its mortification? The Greek sense of habit seems to have been lost. Is its retrieval, then, a sign of anachronism, of precious antiquarianism?

We will show that, for Ravaisson, this is by no means the case. One of the major contributions of his 1838 text is the synthesis, carried out with a crystalline clarity and rigour, of the ancient and modern senses of habit.

It is a matter of bringing to light their common ground, to demonstrate that there can never be one without the other, to affirm that it is one and the same force, one and the same principle, which produces habit at once as grace (ease, facility, power) and as addiction (machinic repetition). This common ground, this self-relation of habit makes it unavoidable for contemporary thought, and marks at the same time the genius of Ravaisson's essay.

The ontological and biological value of habit

Habit as way of being

In the first three paragraphs of the text, Ravaisson distinguishes between a 'widely understood' and a 'special' sense of habit. In its 'understood' sense, habit 'is a general and permanent way of being'. In its special sense, habit is not only 'acquired habit, but habit that is contracted, owing to a change, with respect to the very change that gave birth to it'.

According to this 'special' sense, habit is what remains of a repeated change, the residue of repetition. It is this that justifies the current definition of habit proposed by dictionaries: 'process by which repetition of the same acts, of the same situations or phenomena weakens or effaces certain sensations, impressions or feelings that were originally experienced'.¹ But habit is not only this. It 'is not, therefore, merely a state', argues Ravaisson. Far from forming a set of disactivated traces, the subsistence, this residual being of habit, is in fact constituted by a resource of possibilities. Habit is a past (as result), but this past makes possible a future: 'habit remains for a change which either is no longer or is not yet; it remains for a possible change. This is its defining characteristic'.

The trace has inscribed in being the very possibility of changing. With habit, the memory of change is one with the possibility of change in general. If being was able to change once, in the manner of contracting a habit, it can change again. It is available for a change to come. Certainly, change generates habit, but in return habit is actualized as a habit of changing. Being is thus habituated to its future. It *has* a future.

This aptitude, the very possibility of the possible, justifies the definition of habit as disposition or virtue. Habit 'is a disposition, a virtue'. Aristotle was the first to show that habit coincides with a being's possibility of accomplishment. The 'special' subject of Ravaisson's essay is precisely habit understood as a power of beginning.

This is why only a being capable of temporalizing change is susceptible to habit: 'what brings a habit into being is not simply change understood as modifying the thing, but change understood as occurring in time'. In other words, habit is not the result of just any repetition. It is what Deleuze names a 'repetition productive of difference'. Indeed habit reveals, says Deleuze, 'the paradox of repetition'. This paradox is related to the fact that we can speak of repetition only 'by virtue of the change or difference that it introduces in the mind which contemplates it'. Or again, 'habit draws from repetition something new: difference'.² This difference is related to the fact that repetition creates an aptitude for change.

This change must be understood as a modification of the way of being or the general disposition of an individual. In his *Physics*, Aristotle calls this way of being or disposition the 'form' or 'interior aptitude' of a being.³ It is the identity of the one who undergoes the change that changes. There is no identity without difference, identity is only a process of differentiation, a regulated play between same and other. 'Like is unaffected by like', asserts Ravaisson.

Reversible energies

It seems then that habit can be approached from two different – even, at first glance, opposing – points of view. These two senses are recorded in the article 'Habitude' in Lalande's *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie*, where a citation from the German philosopher Tönnies (1855–1936) confirms the double signification:

I consider that conceptual thought must distinguish what language confuses, namely (1) habit as *objective fact*, which consists in the regular repetition of an event, for example: 'he has a habit of getting up early'. Here, the causes or the motives are indifferent; they can be extremely varied: medical prescription, the pleasure of walking in the morning, lack of sleep, etc.; (2) habit as *subjective disposition*: in this case, habit is itself the motive and, as disposition, I call it without hesitation a *form of willing (des Willens)*.⁴

From the very beginning of Ravaisson's text, we see that these two senses of habit actually proceed from the same principle. This principle is presented as a process of *reversibility of energies*. Habit is at first an effect, a way of being that *results* from change, but it gradually becomes a *cause* of change itself, as it initiates and maintains repetition: 'the change that has come to [a living being] from the outside becomes more and more foreign to it; the change

that it has brought upon itself becomes more and more proper to it'. The principle of reversibility of energies provokes the transformation of receptivity (or passivity) into spontaneity (or activity), and of activity into passivity. Ravaisson insists that 'receptivity diminishes and spontaneity increases. Such is the general law of the disposition, of the habit, that the continuity or the repetition of change seems to engender in every living being'. Further on: 'it is by the progressive development of an internal activity that the progressive weakening of passivity is to be explained'. Habit weakens passivity and exalts activity. Conversely, the exaltation of activity is accompanied by the birth of a passion. Habit is thus the 'story of two agonistic powers'.

An impression coming from the outside, received with passivity, is gradually transformed into desire. The latter calls for the return of the impression, and thus of the activity. Indeed, for the same impression to be reproduced, the individual must seek it out. By this very fact, and conversely, activity becomes more and more prompt, increasingly easy; the individual ends up accomplishing it mechanically, which introduces an element of passivity into the operation itself.

The inversion of energies ends by creating a milieu, an intermediary between passivity and activity, both having a 'common trait', says Ravaisson. This milieu, 'unreflective spontaneity' created by habit, forms 'tendency'. Habit now becomes this 'blind tendency that derives from passion as much as from action'.

Habit and the living being

This analysis does not apply only to the individual. Habit obeys a law of evolution and of life in general. The reciprocity between suffering and creation, the mutual reversibility of passivity and activity, marks a double interval, which habit fills by creating tendencies in the milieu. This interval is first of all that separating the two opposed limits of the hierarchy of organized beings. The lower limit is 'necessity – Destiny, as might be said, but in the spontaneity of Nature'. The higher limit is 'the Freedom of the understanding'. Habit will appear as a unifying trait between these two limits. It is for this reason that it can be considered 'as a method – as the only real method – for the estimation, by a convergent infinite series, of the relation, real in itself but incommensurable in the understanding, of Nature and Will'.

Why? At the very beginning of *Of Habit*, the word 'nature' signifies matter, which obeys the laws of determinism – that is to say, the whole of inorganic nature. Progressively, however, the author dismisses this sense and reserves

the term 'nature' for the domain of organic life. But the first sense remains. Nature in the first sense is present in nature in the second sense; there is a memory of the material within the organic. This memory is *instinct*. Ravaissou claims that instinct is the state of nature (1) of nature (2), a practical knowing that is unconscious of itself, and which rules automatically, *without mediation*, the process of adaptation that enables the living being to reach and to consume without delay the object of its desire. Yet the higher we go in the hierarchy of beings, the more instinct is lost. The first interval – that which separates the two extreme limits of the hierarchy of living beings – is coupled with a second interval, which separates in higher beings what is united in simpler beings, namely the interval between desire and its satisfaction. The higher we go in the scale of life, the more desire is severed from its object, separated from it by complex mediations. Instinct is lacking.

'What is the difference between habit and instinct?', asks Ravaissou. Habit supplements the absence of instinct by the creation of a milieu between activity and passivity, but it is not as certain. Instinct is a first term of life, anterior to habit. Here 'nature is . . . merely the immediation of the end and the principle, of the reality and ideality of movement, or of change in general, in the spontaneity of desire'.

In instinctive acts there is precisely not an interval between energy, desire and object, between the vital force and that towards which it aims. But the increasing complexity of life is accompanied by a growing discontinuity between action and reaction. Whilst 'in the inorganic world, reaction is exactly equal to action', in life 'the action of the external world and the reaction of life itself become increasingly different, and appear to be increasingly independent of one another'. The circle of equality between what we now call stimulus and response is broken; at the very least its limits have become looser. Habit appears to be a sort of substitute for instinct, a second nature that restores nature since it is productive of 'unreflective spontaneity', of the 'tendency' that transforms voluntary movements into instincts. Habit thus makes possible the adaptation of means to end, of action to its goal, and reduces the interval that separates a project from its accomplishment. Bichat says this already: 'Everything is regulated by habit in animal life'.⁵

The analysis of subjectivity and the problem of effort

On the one hand, habit is not as infallible as instinct; on the other, it permits a greater freedom and initiative in the choice of the means necessary for the

satisfaction of desire. This is what Ravaisson shows in the second part of his essay. He considers, in accordance with the degrees of an ascending dialectic, the superior forms of life and comes to examine consciousness – ‘understanding’, ‘intelligence’ and ‘will’. At this level, where instinct is definitively absent, it is between the idea and reality that the interval is opened. Habit will close this interval, by binding the two instances in a free act, an act of desire.

The condition of intelligence, declares Ravaisson, is unity: not immediate unity, but the unity of the idea as unity of heterogeneity, power of synthesis – ‘the intelligible unity of a certain diversity’. The most original form of unity is the ‘self’, who accomplishes the synthesis of conscious states, representations and acts of the will. Here Ravaisson begins his analysis of *subjectivity* as a certain synthesis – the reference to Kant is explicit – of power and resistance. The subject is differentiated from itself in the interval that at once unites and separates its tendency to act and its tendency to receive or to obey. The identity of the self is born from its resistance to itself, and not from resistance to something external.

We reach here the point in the essay where Ravaisson shows himself to be closest to Maine de Biran. According to Maine de Biran, the ‘I’ becomes aware of itself at the moment when it exerts its action on an organ. Between passivity and activity, there is a state of mobilization, a tension which marks the presence of the self to itself and to the world. Ravaisson insists on the privilege of *touching* in the experience of effort. Touch is not the highest of the senses, but it is here that effort first of all unfolds.

What role does habit play here? It wears down resistance and allows effort to realize itself. If effort were simply a tension that never eased, if it did not result in something, it would remain merely the beginning of action. With habit, and always according to the law of the reversibility of energies, ‘fatigue and effort’ disappear. Its ‘tendency’ marks the ‘progress’ that ‘coincides with the degradation of sensation and effort’. It maintains sufficient resistance for the subject to feel himself, but at the same time it makes possible the weakening of resistance necessary to the realization of the act. What is said of the fist can and must be extended to thought and to the will: these two faculties are realized only in an act that is analogous to the clenching of a fist. We should not forget that the etymology of the word ‘concept’ refers to the physical act of grasping.

It is in this way that, by effort, ideas can meet being, that intentions can be deployed as effective actions. The most beautiful passage of the essay is doubtless the one in which Ravaisson affirms that

in reflection and will, the end of movement is an idea, an ideal to be accomplished: something that should be, that can be, and which is not yet. It is a possibility to be realized. But as the end becomes fused with the movement, and the movement with the tendency, possibility, the ideal, is realized in it. The *idea* becomes *being*, the very being of the movement and of the tendency that it determines. Habit becomes more and more a *substantial idea*. The obscure intelligence that through habit comes to replace reflection, this immediate intelligence where subject and object are confounded, is a *real* intuition, in which the real and the ideal, being and thought are fused together.

Thanks to habit, then, the will and thought rediscover the lost spontaneity that brings about the fusion of being and the ideal. But this rediscovered nature is more generous, more profound, than the lost instinct. Second nature is a 'law of grace'. Grace is the gift of the origin, given after the fact, to beings that have forgotten their origin. The grace of habit develops both intelligence and the heart, tendencies to action and tendencies to the good. Another name for habit could be charity.

Should we deconstruct *Of Habit*?

Let us return to the fact that this same law of grace can be transformed into a principle of addiction, and let us not forget the two indissoluble meanings of habit: in facilitating movements, habit also weakens our consciousness of them. Repetition recurs for itself, as an 'obscure activity'. In this way habit works to the advantage of mechanisms, automatism and the routine that seems to come to oppose desire.

Yet should we not accede on this point to the argument Jacques Derrida develops about Ravaissan in *On Touching – Jean-Luc Nancy*? Far from opposing Ravaissan to habit's detractors, Derrida submits both positive and negative accounts of habit to a single deconstructive reading, tending thus to temper the originality of Ravaissan's essay.

According to Derrida, the conception of habit as an ontological law (Aristotle, Ravaissan) and the conception of it as routine (Descartes, Kant) are both connected, in two contradictory ways, to a single thought: the thought of the auto-affection of the subject, of its touching itself, by which it solicits itself and responds. Certainly Descartes and Kant separate habit from the constitution of the subject. For both, habit apparently has no role

in auto-affection, which is a transcendental process. Nevertheless, if one defines auto-affection as an original touch by which the subject experiences its presence to itself, then a mediating capacity between the subject and itself is required. It makes no difference whether one calls this intermediary 'habit', or an affection of the transcendental subject by the empirical subject. The subject, in every case, is conceived as a self-interpellation, a place of synthesis of its identity with and difference from itself. Consequently, Ravaisson's thought, far from obstructing metaphysics, would only confirm the traditional analysis of the constitution of subjectivity as milieu and contact.

Derrida identifies

a sort of conspiracy, a philosophical intrigue of touch, in Europe, along certain boundaries (more figures of touch) and at the borders of France, between France and England . . . and between France and Germany – with Kant and Husserl on one side, and Maine de Biran, Ravaisson, Bergson, Merleau-Ponty, and Deleuze on the other. . .⁶

Descartes, for his part, does not appear in this list but he is cited immediately after this long list of 'conspirators'.⁷ Whether or not they recognise the privilege of habit in the constitution of the subject, the authors grouped together by Derrida suppose that auto-affection is impossible without a middle-term that reconciles the extremities of the subject (passivity and activity) and weakens their mutual resistance. In the philosophical tradition

this attention paid to the 'middle-term' is inseparable from [the] *continuum* whose symptoms we have tracked through numerous intuitionist and spiritualist haptologies, both classic and modern. By the same token, it is also inseparable – and this aspect is just as decisive – from a postulated *indivisibility*.⁸

In forging the term 'haptology' Derrida aims to delimit a traditional conception of touch that privileges it over the other senses, in using it to characterize not only the physical but also the logical contact of the subject with itself.

Habit, the guarantor of this concept, the intermediary between the self and itself, between activity and passivity, would play the same role, even if under another name, as the transcendental 'hand' of Kant, which allows the empirical subject and transcendental subject to meet as subject.⁹ Indeed, as Derrida goes on to say, in every case, 'from Plato to Bergson, from Berkeley or Biran to Husserl and beyond, the same formal constraint is carried out'.

Something – a milieu, a middle-term – ‘comes to fulfil, fill and satisfy the intentional movement of desire, as a desire for presence’.¹⁰

Hence the ontology of habit and effort does not at all rupture the transcendental conception of subjectivity. It must be said that Ravaisson is treated in Derrida’s book as an avatar of the metaphysics of presence. ‘His axioms’, says Derrida, ‘are strictly and often word for word inherited from Biran’.¹¹ Ravaisson’s developments on effort, touch and habit itself would only have a relative originality. One would find in them, in an extremely marked fashion, the ‘overvaluation of the middle term’, ‘a metaphysics of the life of spirit as a metaphysics of touch’.¹² Ravaisson would thus belong to the lineage of the metaphysics of touch, supported by a metaphysics of life that accords a privilege to the principle form of life, man:

If Ravaisson apparently avoids anthropocentrism or anthropologism, if he does not lock himself into a description that would pay much attention to the human hand, it is also because his purpose is to establish a spiritualist metaphysics of life, a general ontology of the living, which is revealed from one end to the other of his book, and orients his interpretation of touch.¹³

How can it be denied, indeed, that *Of Habit* is dedicated to the study of subjectivity, at once mind and soul, intelligence and will? How to deny the ascending movement that structures the work, according to which the higher one goes in the hierarchy of beings, the more complex subjectivity becomes, and the more capable of self-differentiation?¹⁴

It is also true that, for Ravaisson, the law of the progressive independence of action and reaction characterizing superior forms of life cannot be explained by mechanical causes. Cartesian mechanism, the origin of the theory of the animal-machine, rests precisely on the law of the equality of action and reaction. Ravaisson’s conception of habit, without introducing any rupture into the tradition, would simply allow itself to be governed by onto-theology. Whilst in the organic world reaction is equal to action, or rather is confused with it, in organic life there is a manifest gap between receptivity and its corresponding movements, and this gap can only be explained by a ‘hyperorganic cause’. *Of Habit* clearly elaborates, therefore, a spiritualist metaphysics of life. The law of habit, which allows the gap between activity and passivity to be reduced, does not belong to the domain of determinism. It is of the order of final causality, not of efficient causality. Ravaisson declares: ‘both physical and rationalist theories are lacking on this point’. The numerous references in the essay to the animist and vitalist

doctors, who refuse to explain life solely by inorganic causes, should not come as a surprise. The soul is precisely this vital principle that remains forever irreducible to mechanism.

As Jean Cazeueneuve writes, citing Jean Baruzi, in his text *La philosophie médicale de Ravaisson*, ‘Ravaisson discovers in the vitalists and animists a method to which he attributes a permanent value. Is it not they who will record the extraordinary disproportion, in the living being, between felt impressions and the increasingly broad movements that seem to respond to them?’¹⁵ The denunciation of the insufficiency of mechanism evidently rests on a spiritualism of life, which governs the account of habit. And it is true that this account is organized according to a hierarchy of beings that posits man as its highest *telos*. Finally, this vital spiritualism concludes with theological considerations. By virtue of habit, says Ravaisson, ‘nature lies wholly in desire, and desire, in turn, lies in the good that attracts it. In this way the profound words of a profound theologian might be confirmed: “Nature is prevenient grace”. It is God within us, God hidden solely by being so far within us in this intimate source of ourselves, to whose depths we do not descend’. Derrida comments: ‘How is one to separate this “prevenient grace” from all the *senses* and ways of the Gospel, from its light or flesh?’¹⁶ Like any other metaphysical conception of authenticity, Ravaisson’s conception of habit, without introducing any rupture in the tradition, would order itself simply and without any real resistance to onto-theology.

The tics of presence

There is no doubt that Ravaisson’s philosophy belongs to metaphysics. However, insisting solely on this dimension of the text, reducing it to a few postulates that one can ascribe to the privilege of presence, crushing it under its debt to Maine de Biran, making of it the link in a chain which is nothing less than the history of philosophy as a whole, is unjust and misses what is essential.

We will not discuss here the central affirmation of Derrida’s book according to which Jean-Luc Nancy would be the only philosopher to present a non-metaphysical conception of touch. We will simply say that in *Of Habit* Ravaisson disrupts very significantly, even if that is not his explicit theme (why would it be?), the purity of auto-affection and the clarity of presence to oneself.

Indeed, the two senses of habit – grace and addiction – are articulated in Ravaissan's work at the intersection of auto-affection and what Derrida names 'hetero-affection', at the intersection of presence and the 'intruder'. The two senses of habit, opposed but bound to one another, express the impossibility for presence to coincide with itself, the impossibility for plenitude not to be cracked, fractured, eroded by its ghostly double.

In attempting, in *On Touching*, to sunder the supposed unity and integrity of auto-affection, Derrida asks:

And if we assume the 'interiority of psychic acts' is it not necessary, from the outset, that visibility, being exposed to the outside, the appresentative detour, the intrusion of the other, and so forth, be *already* at work? . . . Must not the intruder already be inside the place? Is it not necessary that this spacing thus open up the place for a replacing, and that it make room for the substitute, the metonymical supplement, and the technical?¹⁷

It is a question of whether every experience of self-touching and of mediation with oneself does not suppose the mediation of the other, from the outside; from the non-self, instrument or machine, for example.

But Ravaissan says nothing other than this in showing that habit in the positive sense of the construction of a project of life and of the constitution of subjective space, cannot go without habit in the mechanical sense, thus rooting these two senses in a single force. The entire essay is dedicated to the bifurcated treatment of habit: there is no presence without a parasite. Having posited the unity of intelligence and desire, which is realized by habit, Ravaissan declares, 'The same principle and the same analogy seem to reveal the secret of the abnormal and parasitic life that develops within regular life, which has its periods, its course, its own birth and death'.

It is in developing a theory of illness that Ravaissan comes to analyse the ineluctable presence of the parasite at the heart of habit. Illness is a habit, it has its own habits, it develops with life and gnaws at it from the inside. It thus becomes the disease *of* habit. The French language conserves a few traces of the presence of the Greek term '*hexis*' in the medical terms '*cachexie*' (cachexy: state of emaciation or of general fatigue owing to malnutrition or linked to the terminal phase of serious illnesses) and '*fièvre heptique*' (a fever leading to cachexy). The disposition of the body in illness, its *habitus*, is linked to the regular and periodic recurrence of affections. In fact, *Of Habit* is also an essay of pathology, as indicated by the multiple references to various medical theories. If the domain of illness first of all appears foreign

to the psychology of habit, how can we not think of the principle of repetition, noted by Ravaissou, that governs the latter when we observe phenomena such as fevers, inflammations, spasms, convulsions? These phenomena settle in us like strangers who end up sharing our lives.

In commenting on Ravaissou's many references to the medical domain, Cazeneuve shows that 'meditating on the work of Van Helmont, Stahl, Barthez, Bichat and Buisson was to furnish Ravaissou with diverse inspirations and with very varied points of view on the problem of life: occultism, mysticism, animism, vitalism, plurivitalism. . .'.¹⁸ For Ravaissou, there is no absolute antinomy between these theories insofar as they have a common ground in the denunciation of the insufficiency of mechanism. It is true that this affirmation of the plasticity of the living being against the theory of the animal machine, this belief in a final, 'hyperorganic' cause, can accompany a spiritualist metaphysics, as we have said. But this metaphysics is coupled with a reflection on dependence. According to the doctors of the Stahlian school, parasitic perturbations (fevers, convulsions, etc.) do not find their explanation in the organism itself, but in certain habits that are bound to the movements imparted by the soul. This is a way of saying that every addiction has a psychological origin. It is also a way of saying that the psyche is always haunted.

Doubtless Ravaissou formulates this principle badly, or clumsily, when he wonders if pathological habits depend ultimately on an 'idea' of the soul; is illness, he asks, constituted by an 'idea or a being, or is it not rather an idea and a being at the same time, a concrete and substantial idea beyond consciousness?' But how could we fail to see in this question an anticipation of the concept of psychosomatic illness, or even of the Freudian category of the symptom? Illness would correspond to the materialization or incorporation of a morbid idea. Cazeneuve concludes: 'It would suffice to give to this force the name *libido* to realise that Ravaissou's philosophy presents an interpretation of the theory of animism such that psychoanalysis often confirms it unwittingly'.¹⁹

Illness is certainly an activity that is detached from the living whole. The guiding idea of the body is disturbed in its functions because another idea has developed, which exerts itself independently of it. Analysis of habit shows precisely that an idea can become detached from the soul and gain its own existence when at the beginning it was only an element of the whole.²⁰ This idea can consequently have its own 'birth and death'. A passage of the essay describes this process that detaches the idea and isolates it in its materiality:

It is the same force, without losing anything of its higher unity in personality, that proliferates without being divided; that descends without going under; that dissolves itself, in different ways, into its inclinations, acts, and ideas; that is transformed in time, and that is disseminated in space.

It is clear that Ravaissou presents here the coincidence of unity and dissemination.

The law of reversibility of energies at work in the process of habit produces a weakening of passivity and an exaltation of activity. The weakening of passivity is explained by the development of an internal activity, and the exaltation of activity is accompanied by the birth of a passion and a degradation of effort. In this way habit engenders needs and tendencies, which can just as well be needs of intelligence, tendencies of the heart and of the will, as chronic illnesses, addictions, intoxications and tics. Ravaissou is thus able to speak of 'those movements, initially more or less voluntary, that gradually degenerate into convulsive ones, which we call *tics*'.

Gradually escaping from the control of the will or of any other central organ, movements and tendencies are disseminated and live their life, which is the haunting threat of death in the organism. Hegel expresses it in this way: 'it is the habit of living which leads to death, or, if one takes it in a completely abstract manner, which is death itself'.²¹ For Ravaissou also, it is one and the same force that engenders good and bad habits. Must we see in this affirmation of unity the rejection of strangeness or, on the contrary, the recognition of the presence of the alien within the same?

In *On Touching* Derrida shows that auto-affection is always inhabited by a phantom:

We are asking if there is any pure auto-affection of the touching or the touched, and therefore any pure, immediate experience of the purely proper body, the body proper that is living, purely living. Or if, on the contrary, this experience is not, at the very least, already *haunted*, perhaps even *constitutively* haunted, by some hetero-affection related to spacing and then to visible spatiality – where an intruder may come through, a host, wished or unwished for, a spare and auxiliary other, or a parasite to be rejected, a *pharmakon* that already having at its disposal a dwelling in this place inhabits one's heart of hearts as a ghost.²²

It is precisely of habit as *pharmakon* – at once poison and remedy – that Ravaissou speaks all along.

PREFACE

Because the best things can, under the influence of habit, be transformed into poisons, because conversely ‘the most unhealthy air and food become the very conditions of health, reflection on habit is one of the most important aspects of hygiene, of diagnostics and of therapeutics’. Habit infects and cures, it is a poison that heals sickness: ‘one becomes accustomed over time to the most violent poisons. In relation to chronic illnesses, medicines lose their power, and they have to be changed from time to time’.

These analyses can of course be applied to the logic of habit itself. Because we are habituated to habit, we end up seeing in it only something bad, and no longer recognize the remedy. It is doubtless this that happened to Descartes and to Kant. Perhaps this has also happened to ourselves. Perhaps it has happened to deconstruction. But the rejection of habit – just like the deconstruction of presence – can become a tic, like anything else.

Prepare, then, before being overwhelmed by tics, to get out of the habit of rejecting habit, to habituate yourself to habit! Do not resist the beauty and the genius of this little masterpiece by Ravaillon! If you are willing to return with him to the Greek *psyche*, you will be thrown straight back into the spirit of the twenty-first century.

Editors' Introduction

Félix Ravaisson's *De l'habitude*, written in 1838, is recognized in France as a canonical philosophical work. Several publishers have an edition of the text in print – the most recent appearing in 2007 – and it is widely taught in French universities. Yet in the middle of the twentieth century *De l'habitude* had become something of a forgotten classic, and it took a German thinker to remind many French philosophers of its originality and importance. The German thinker was Martin Heidegger, who expressed profound admiration for Ravaisson's text when, in September 1945, he was visited in Freiburg by the young journalist Frédéric de Towarnicki. Heidegger's enthusiasm was subsequently related to Sartre, Lévinas and Jean Wahl, much to their surprise. Since then, French philosophers influenced by German phenomenology have been more attentive to the riches hidden in their own tradition: Paul Ricœur, for example, has hailed Ravaisson as a great philosopher, and his work has been the subject of monographs by, amongst others, Dominique Janicaud and François Laruelle. It is hoped that this bilingual, critical edition of *De l'habitude* will facilitate a similar and long overdue reception of Ravaisson's work in the Anglophone world.

Ravaisson's life and works

The author of *De l'habitude* was born Jean-Gaspard-Félix Ravaisson in 1813, in Namur. His father, the city treasurer, died when he was very young, and his early education was supervised by his mother and her brother, Gaspard-Théodore Mollien, a former government minister whose surname Ravaisson

later added to his own. He went on to study in Paris at the Collège Rollin, where his mentor was Hector Poret, a translator and follower of Scottish common-sense philosophy with an interest in Kant's thought. Always an exceptional student, Ravaisson left Rollin in 1832 with several prizes, including a national honour prize for his dissertation on philosophical method.

A greater prize was soon to follow. In 1834 Ravaisson was the remarkably young winner of a competition, organized by the Académie des Sciences morales et politiques, concerning the meaning and historical reception of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. The subject of the competition was determined by Victor Cousin, director of the École Normale and member of the Académie. Cousin led the 'eclectic' school in Paris, which attempted to regain contact with the history of philosophy in opposition to the disdain for that history promoted by the Revolution, by the success of Condillac's ideas and, earlier still, by the Cartesians. A substantially revised version of Ravaisson's study, *Essai sur la métaphysique d'Aristote*, was published in two volumes, the first in 1837, the second in 1846.¹ The study attempts to systematize Aristotle's doctrine and to demonstrate its originality. For Ravaisson, Aristotle is the founder of metaphysics insofar as he overcomes both the materialism of the pre-Socratics and the abstractions of Platonism, by grasping the immaterial reality of individual, particular beings. This essence of all things is *noein*, thought, and is, as Henri Bergson puts it,

the unity joining beings to one another, the unity of a thought that we see, from inorganic matter to the plant, from plant to animal, from animal to man, until from concentration to concentration we should end in divine thought, which thinks all things in thinking itself.²

The idea that thought constitutes the unity of being, and the conviction that this unity can be accessed by an intellectual intuition beneath sense-experience, are central to the French 'spiritualist' tradition that Ravaisson's thinking came to epitomize.

It is thought that before rewriting the first volume of his study of Aristotle, in 1834 or 1835, Ravaisson attended some of F. W. J. Schelling's lectures in Munich, probably on the advice of Cousin, who was in close contact with Schelling and promoted his ideas in France. In 1835 Ravaisson published a translation of a preface that the German philosopher had written to a volume of Cousin's work.³ The reservations expressed in this preface may well have reinforced Ravaisson's perception of the weaknesses of Cousin's 'eclectic' attempt to synthesize a form of sensualist empiricism with contemporary German thought. Commentators disagree about the extent to which

Schelling's idealism and philosophy of nature influenced Ravaisson. Schelling, for his part, had a high opinion of Ravaisson's work; he not only hoped that Ravaisson would translate his *Philosophy of Mythology* – a hope that remained unrealized – but he also refers to him in the *Philosophy of Revelation* as 'a Frenchman to whom we owe important work on Aristotle'.⁴

In 1837 Ravaisson gained first place in the *agrégation* – the competitive state examination – in philosophy, and a year later he submitted *De l'habitude* to the Sorbonne as his doctoral thesis, together with a secondary study of Speusippus in Latin. At this time he seemed destined for an academic career, but in 1838 he obtained – through Narcisse-Achille de Salvandy, one of Victor Cousin's political adversaries – a high-ranking civil service post as principal private secretary to the Minister of Public Instruction. Shortly afterwards he was nominated to a university teaching post in Rennes, but he chose to remain in Paris. Ravaisson may have been dissuaded from pursuing an academic career by Cousin, for at this time relations between the two had soured as a result of differences both personal and philosophical. Yet it also appears that Ravaisson had little desire to live in the provinces or for the relative poverty of life as a university teacher. He was in his element amongst fashionable Parisian society, and his family connections opened many doors for him, allowing him to move in the same circles as Balzac, Alfred de Musset, Ampère, Chateaubriand and Lamartine.

Instead of a typical university career, then, Ravaisson embarked on a career in the civil service. In 1840 he became Inspector of Libraries, and in 1859 he was named Inspector General of Higher Education. When the *agrégation* in philosophy was reinstated in 1863 – after Napoleon III, repeating his uncle's suppression of philosophy, had discontinued it in the coup d'état of 1851 – Ravaisson became president of the committee charged with setting and grading the examinations. His influence became even greater upon the publication in 1867 of his report, commissioned by the government, on French philosophy in the nineteenth century. This seminal *Rapport sur la philosophie en France au XIX^{ème} siècle*, which presents spiritualism as the inner truth and culmination of the philosophical tradition as a whole, was studied by hundreds of students preparing for the *agrégation* and gave rise, according to Bergson, 'to a change of orientation of philosophy in the university'.⁵ The final lines of the text present a sort of 'spiritualist manifesto', and crystallize the ideas advanced in *De l'habitude*:

If the genius of France has not changed, there will be nothing more natural for her than the triumph of the high doctrine, which teaches that

matter is only the last degree and, so to speak, the shadow of existence, over systems that reduce everything to material elements and to a blind mechanism; which teaches that veritable existence, of which all other is only an imperfect sketch, is that of spirit; that, in truth, to be is to live, and to live is to think and to will; that nothing occurs without persuasion; that the good and beauty alone explain the universe and its author; that the infinite and the absolute, whose nature presents to us only limitations, consist in spiritual freedom; that freedom is thus the last word of things, and that, beneath the disorder and antagonisms which trouble the surface where phenomena occur, in the essential and eternal truth, everything is grace, love and harmony.⁶

If spiritualism did not 'triumph' over positivism and materialism quite as decisively as Ravaisson hoped it would, it nevertheless dominated French philosophy for several decades, particularly through the work of Lachelier, Boutroux and Bergson.

Ravaisson excelled in art as well as in philosophy, exhibiting portraits at the Paris Salon on several occasions under the name of Laché. In 1870 he became curator of classical antiquities at the Louvre, where he carried out a major restoration of the Venus de Milo, and he published many articles about Greek art. He admired above all Leonardo da Vinci, whose work he studied extensively during the 1830s and 40s. He found an echo of his spiritualist reading of Aristotle in Leonardo's *Treatise on Painting*, which suggests that true art seeks to portray the individuality of the model, and that this requires the artist to see not just lines but movement, and behind this movement the hidden intention or aspiration of the subject. In the 1850s Ravaisson was in charge of a report on the teaching of drawing in schools, which led to radical reforms of teaching practice, and he contributed two articles, 'Art' and 'Dessin', to the 1882 *Dictionnaire de Pédagogie et d'Instruction Primaire*. Critical of the emphasis on geometry in the teaching of drawing, in these articles Ravaisson argues that instead of representing natural forms by abstract mathematical shapes, children should begin by drawing the human body, copying the curves that characterize this highest of organisms. Underlying this view is the principle that the higher explains the lower, or that the inorganic should be understood in terms of the living, rather than the other way around. In the concrete effort by which the hand traces the graceful movements constitutive of organic forms, suggests Ravaisson, the student of art can feel directly the inner essence of life.

Ravaisson's philosophical reputation was secured by his three major works: *Essai sur la métaphysique d'Aristote*, *De l'habitude*, and *Rapport sur la*

philosophie en France au XIX^{ème} siècle. As Arthur O. Lovejoy informed the readers of *Mind* in 1913, all three were widely recognized as masterpieces in France, and Ravaisson was elected to the Académie des Sciences morales et politiques in 1880.⁷ After his death in 1900 he was replaced in the Académie by Bergson, who delivered an extended eulogy on his life and works. Ravaisson also produced noteworthy essays on contemporary European philosophy (1840) and Pascal (1887), and an article entitled 'Métaphysique et Morale' (1893) for the inaugural volume of the journal of the same name. Ravaisson left unfinished fragments of a major work, which were published posthumously under the title *Testament philosophique*. These last writings, more explicitly religious than his earlier works, suggest that love and generosity can be regarded as basic metaphysical principles, and as the foundations of social and educational reform. It seems that all the different aspects of Ravaisson's long career – not just the philosophical writings, but also his pedagogical reforms, reflections on art and work at the Louvre – form a coherent whole that reflects his spiritualist vision of life.

The question of habit and modern philosophy

Ravaisson's approach to the question of habit is wide-ranging: he considers the nature and influence of habit not just in the human sphere, but throughout the natural world. This approach reflects the various senses of the word itself. The meaning of 'habit' that is now most familiar to us is that of a settled disposition or tendency to act in a particular way, acquired through repetition of the action in question. Equally familiar is the more passive sense of becoming habituated to something: we become used or accustomed to particular sensations, to a particular environment, to a particular routine, to the point of taking them for granted and not paying much attention to them. When we consider the etymology of habit and the history of its use, we uncover a wider range of phenomena. The Latin *habitus* – like the Greek *hexis* – comes from the verb 'to have' or 'to hold' (*habere, ekhein*), and indeed habit might be defined, most broadly, as the way in which a being has or holds itself. As well as a stable tendency to action, 'habit' was once commonly used to signify an individual's outward appearance, demeanour, bearing, bodily condition or constitution, and style of dress. Habit is also a botanical term signifying both the way a plant grows, and its consequent shape; similarly, mineralogists record the habits of crystals. These more external, physical senses of habit

emphasize the notion of shape or form, and have no apparent connection to repetition.

In the human realm, habit presents a challenge to philosophy insofar as it involves an absence of thought and attention, and consequently a taking for granted, which seem to be antithetical both to the philosophical attitude of wonder and to the philosophical method of critical reflection. In this respect all philosophers, whether or not they explicitly thematize habit, contend with it. Philosophy often takes as its subject matter that which is most ubiquitous and familiar: what are we more accustomed to than being embodied, being in a world, the passing of time, the facts of motion and change? If, as Proust suggests, 'the heavy curtain of habit conceals from us almost the whole universe', and prevents us from knowing ourselves, then philosophers face a task of unconcealment that has to counter what Proust describes as the 'annihilating force' of habit.⁸

The view that habit is the enemy not only of philosophical reflection, but of sound judgement and of moral action in general, characterizes above all the modern metaphysics of the subject instituted by Descartes and developed by Kant. The essence of this modern project is the emancipation and purification of reason from all historical contingencies, cultural prejudices and bodily impulses – from tradition, from superstition, from the passions, from the illusions of the senses and from habit. Thus liberated, the autonomous subject would ground its knowledge and legitimize its actions on the basis, and within the limits, of reason alone. Society, likewise, would be bound together not by an inheritance of shared customs, norms and practices, but by universal reason.

Both Cartesian and Kantian dualisms regard habit through the lens of an ontological dichotomy between mind and body, between freedom and necessity. According to Kant, habit (*Gewohnheit*, *Angewohnheit*) is 'a physical inner necessitation to continue behaving in the same way we have behaved thus far', and as such 'deprives even good actions of their moral value because it detracts from our freedom of mind; moreover, it leads to thoughtless repetition of the same action (mechanical uniformity) and so becomes ridiculous . . . As a rule, all habits are objectionable'.⁹ To some extent this description of habit is justified, insofar as habitual actions appear to happen without conscious reflection and decision. But it is the metaphysical and methodological bases of Cartesian and Kantian philosophy that entirely exclude habit, so prevalent and significant in human life, from knowledge, from morality and also from religious belief. This exclusion of habit persists even in those modern philosophies of the will that reject rationalism – in

Kierkegaard's thought, for example, which locates human freedom and consequently the whole of spiritual life in a pure interiority of the subject.

It is not surprising, then, that the more positive accounts of habit are to be found in philosophies that undermine the Enlightenment project. Hume, for example, suggests that habit or custom is 'the great guide of human life', since it 'renders our experience useful to us'; without habit, 'we should be entirely ignorant of every matter of fact beyond what is immediately present to memory and the senses . . . There would be an end at once of all action, as well as of the most part of speculation'.¹⁰ Hume would agree with his opponents that habit undermines the activity of strictly rational reflection: the philosopher can only suspend his assumptions and beliefs for so long before the force of habit carries him back to his natural attitude – but for Hume this is a welcome lapse into the accustomed state, for it saves the thinker from an unsustainable scepticism and enables him to live, to function in or *inhabit* the world.

Hume goes some way towards arguing that our most basic beliefs and judgements – in particular, those concerning cause and effect – have their basis in habit, rather than in any rational foundation. However, if habit mitigates his scepticism, his commitment to empiricism prevents him, beyond invoking the principle of habit, from explaining what habit is and how it operates. All we can observe of habit are repetitions and regularities, patterns of thought and behaviour, and Hume's references to a 'propensity' produced by repeated acts stretch his own methodological constraints even in obliquely indicating some kind of disposition distinct from, and causally linked with, the observed phenomena. When he writes that '[w]herever the repetition of any particular act or operation produces a propensity to renew the same act or operation, without being impelled by any reasoning or process of the understanding, we always say, that this propensity is the effect of *Custom*,' Hume is careful to confine his claim to what 'we always say' – which might itself be considered a habit – rather than to what we can legitimately conclude from either experience or reason.

If habit is inseparable from the empirical insofar as it develops through the repetition of actions and experiences, it also eludes empiricism insofar as it seems to suppose an unobservable disposition or potentiality that is modified by repetitions. While the Cartesian philosophy of the subject is too dualistic to accord any positive *role* to habit, Hume's more sympathetic treatment is too methodologically limited to offer a positive *account* of habit. Ravaillon's essay challenges both dualism and empiricism by claiming that reflection on habit uncovers a continuity between mind and body, freedom and necessity,

will and nature, that is inaccessible to the understanding as well as to the senses.

The double law of habit

Ravaisson's account of habit is based on the insight that it operates according to a 'double law'. This law is stated, in its most succinct form, as follows: 'The continuity or the repetition of passion weakens it; the continuity or repetition of action exalts and strengthens it'. More specifically, 'prolonged or repeated sensation diminishes gradually and eventually fades away. Prolonged or repeated movement becomes gradually easier, quicker and more assured. Perception, which is linked to movement, similarly becomes clearer, swifter and more certain' (p. 49). Although Ravaisson claims that 'most of the authors who have examined habit' have recognized this law, his formulation of it draws most directly on the analysis of habit presented in Pierre Maine de Biran's *The Influence of Habit on the Faculty of Thinking* (1802). This detailed study was the prize-winning entry to a competition organized by the Institut de France, and the first of several influential works of philosophical psychology written by Biran. Although Biran published relatively little in his lifetime, Victor Cousin edited four volumes of his writings in 1834.

Maine de Biran's 1802 study was, in turn, influenced by the work of the vitalist physiologist Xavier Bichat, whose analysis in his *Physiological Researches on Life and Death* (1799) prompted the Institut de France to hold a competition in order to encourage further research on habit. In his *Researches* Bichat claims that habit operates only in the animal sphere, where it 'acts in an inverse ratio' upon feeling (*le sentiment*) and judgement, for 'feeling is constantly blunted by [habit], whereas judgement on the contrary owes to it its perfection. The more we look at an object, the less we are sensible of its painful or agreeable qualities and the better do we judge of all its attributes'.¹¹ Bichat explains the effect of habit on feeling by arguing that the intensity of sensation is determined by a pre-reflective and involuntary comparison in the mind between present and past sensations. It is this comparison that is influenced by frequent repetition:

every time we see an object, hear a sound, or taste a dish, etc., we find less difference between what we experience and what we have experienced . . . Every state of relative pleasure or pain is incessantly brought to a state of indifference by the influence of habit.¹²

This effect of habit on feeling is used to explain the perfection of judgement. Bichat offers the example of a man walking through a meadow full of different kinds of flowers: at first this man is 'distracted' and absorbed by the mixture of scents, but as habit first weakens and then effaces this initial feeling he is able to distinguish the particular smells of each plant, and to make judgements about them. According to Bichat, then, the two influences of habit may seem to be opposed, but in fact one explains the other: the diminution of sensation allows the activity of judgement to occur with increasing facility, and in this way habit achieves the 'perfection of every act of animal life'.¹³

While Bichat formulates his thesis concerning the dual effects of habit in terms of a distinction between 'feeling' and 'judgement', Maine de Biran opposes feeling, or sensation, to movement and perception: 'sensation, continued or repeated, fades, is gradually obscured and ends by disappearing without leaving any trace. Repeated movement gradually becomes more precise, more prompt, and easier'.¹⁴ This shift occurs as a result of the importance accorded to motor activity in Biran's psychology, which is based on a distinction between passive and active impressions. Passive impressions are pure sensations, whereas active impressions are perceptions that involve the voluntary movement of the body and its sense organs. Biran claims that motor activity is the origin of consciousness: 'It is *I* who move, or who *wish* to move, and it is also *I* who am moved. Here are the two terms of the relation which are required to ground the first simple judgement of personality: *I am*'.¹⁵ This apperception or self-awareness can be identified with an impression of effort, which is felt when the will, in initiating movement, encounters the resistance of the motor organs, which in turn encounter resistance from external objects.

In the introduction to his study, Maine de Biran resolves to confine his enquiries to the *effects* of habit: he states, echoing Hume's scepticism, that since 'we know nothing of the nature of forces', we must remain with 'the relation and succession of phenomena'. In the course of the text he nevertheless offers conjectures that attempt to explain, first of all, the decline of sensations through their continuity or repetition. Biran refuses Bichat's comparative account of sensation, since he holds that passive impressions are independent of any form of thought. He also rejects mechanistic or 'material'¹⁶ explanations in terms of actual physical modifications of the sense organs, not only because the supposed modifications have not been observed in the organs themselves, but also because they are unable to account for the 'distress, malaise, disquiet' or '*desire*'¹⁷ that we often

experience on the removal of the source of a sensation that has faded or vanished completely from our sensory awareness. In order to explain the fading of sensations whilst accounting for these feelings of disquiet or desire, Biran posits an involuntary 'secret activity' belonging to the 'principle of life', and resident in the 'faculty of sensing' proper to the individual sense organs. In fact, through the continuity or repetition of a sensation this secret activity would lift the 'tone of the sense organ', thus accommodating the organ to the sensation and establishing a sort of 'equilibrium' with it.¹⁸ The faculty of sensing would tend towards this equilibrium, and the disquiet or desire felt in the physical absence of a sensation results from disequilibrium between the tone given by the organ and the new sensation. Biran calls the tendency towards equilibrium a 'determination' of the organ, a modification that 'persists and more or less outlasts the impression'.

Concerning the perfection of perception and movement through repetition, Maine de Biran accepts Bichat's hypothesis that the decline of sensation facilitates the more active faculties. However, on this account it is not judgement that is perfected. Biran rejects the claim that in habitual movements and perceptions there occurs, unbeknownst to ourselves, an 'infinitely rapid succession of *judgments* or acts of will,' on the grounds that the progression of habit involves a decline of effort and thus conscious awareness: 'the perception may become more distinct and more precise on the one hand, while on the other the individual is more completely blinded to the active part which he takes in it'.¹⁹ He also refutes the materialist hypothesis of a physical alteration of the organ, such as a gain in muscle mass, since even relatively effortless movements, which do not lead to this material alteration, become less 'remarked' (*aperçus*) in their repetition. Instead, in order to do justice to the phenomena of motor habits, it must be recognized that the repetition of originally willed and thought-out movements produces a 'veritable effect of concentration' in the organs; that parts of the body, as we sometimes say, have their own 'muscle memory'. This 'motor determination' is a 'tendency of the organ' to repeat an action. Biran's psychology implies a certain metaphysics – which Ravaisson will develop – insofar as his theory of persistent tendencies of organs, whether sensory or motor, invokes the notion of potentiality or virtuality: a determination exists as a *power* that will tend to actualize itself.²⁰ According to Biran, determinations account for the faculties of thinking as well as physical movements: he argues that the imagination, which retains and synthesizes impressions, is constituted by determinations of the 'central organ'.²¹

For Maine de Biran, reflection on the double law of habit leads to an ambivalent evaluation of its influence: habit is the

general cause of our progress on the one hand, of our blindness on the other. . . It is to habit that we owe the facility, the precision, and the extreme rapidity of our movements and voluntary operations; but it is habit also which hides from us their nature and quantity.²²

Overall, however, his estimation of habit is more negative than positive. Habit undermines the autonomy of reason, and the philosopher has to counter its effects, since it confuses the active with the passive: habit 'effaces the line of demarcation between voluntary and involuntary acts, between the faculty of feeling and that of perceiving'.²³ At the end of his text Biran portrays habit as both a cause of erroneous belief and a force that binds people 'servilely' to their routines, and his conclusion that 'all that happens exclusively under the sway of habit should lose its authority before the eyes of reason' could just as well have come from Descartes or from Kant.

Ravaisson takes from Maine de Biran not only his formulation of the double law of habit, but also his account of effort and self-consciousness, and the hypothesis that habit produces 'tendencies' to preserve a sensory equilibrium, or to repeat a movement. Ravaisson argues more deliberately than Biran that both intellectualist and materialist accounts cannot adequately explain the phenomena of habit, but this represents a development of Biran's position rather than a departure from it. The key difference between the two thinkers lies in Ravaisson's insistence that a single force underlies the double law of habit: he asserts that continuity or repetition weakens sensibility and excites the power of movement 'in the same way, by one and the same cause: the development of an unreflective spontaneity, which breaks into passivity and the organism, and increasingly establishes itself there, beyond, beneath the region of will, personality and consciousness' (p. 53). This spontaneity or desire is at once active and passive, or somehow between these two, and in this way Ravaisson positively deconstructs the distinction between activity and passivity that Biran had tried to maintain. Crucially, he argues that this spontaneity is both intelligent and free even though it has left the sphere of will and reflection – even though it is 'blind', as he puts it. It is for this reason that Ravaisson's estimation of habit is so much more positive than Biran's, who follows his rationalist predecessors in identifying intelligence and freedom with reflection and the will. For Biran, the 'blindness' of habit is an obstacle to truth, whereas for Ravaisson this same fact reveals an intelligence not confined to mental faculties, but dispersed

throughout the body and, indeed, throughout nature as a whole. Similarly, freedom is not confined to the will, and is therefore not annulled by habit, but rather *made flesh*: as habit progresses, freedom increasingly pervades the body, and increasingly animates it.

Ravaisson's metaphysics

The identification of a single force or activity underlying the double influence of habit is indebted to Aristotle and to Leibniz. The first lines of the text define habit as a 'way of being', and as 'not merely a state' but 'a disposition, a virtue'. State and disposition are two alternative translations of Aristotle's term *hexis*, which comes from the verb *ekhein*, to have. *Hexis* denotes neither a thing, nor a part of an entity such as the soul, but rather a *having*, which in turn indicates a *way of being*.²⁴ By insisting that this be thought of as a disposition rather than a state, Ravaisson indicates that habit has to be interpreted not only ontologically, but also in an active sense. Of course, in Aristotle's philosophy disposition and habit are two distinct concepts; according to the *Nicomachean Ethics* a moral disposition (*hexis*) is the result of habit (*ethos*), which here means the regular repetition of a certain action.²⁵ Ravaisson seeks to unify these two terms: habit 'is a disposition', and the acquisition of habit 'supposes a change in the disposition, in the potential, in the internal virtue of that in which [a] change occurs' (p. 25).

Ravaisson takes from Aristotle, then, the concept of a mutable disposition, a mutable potentiality, and argues that the changes attributed to habit – the dulling of sensations, the improvement of actions – can be explained by a modification of the subject's potentiality or 'internal virtue'. This analysis can be traced back to the discussion of *hexis* in *On the Soul*, which distinguishes between different senses of potentiality and actuality. The example Aristotle gives is that of knowledge: a man is potentially a knower simply insofar as a man is the kind of being that is capable of knowledge; in another sense, a man is potentially a knower when he has acquired knowledge, and thus has the capacity to use it when he wishes to. Both of these potential knowers can be distinguished from the man who is actually in the process of contemplating. According to Aristotle,

The first two men are both only potentially knowers; but whereas the one becomes an actual knower by being altered through learning and frequent changes from an opposite disposition (*hexeis*), the other passes by a

different process from the state of having (*ekein*) arithmetical or grammatical knowledge without exercising it to its exercise.²⁶

This discussion indicates that potentiality (*dunamis*) and actuality (*energeia*) are relative terms, and this means that Aristotle's second example – the man who possesses knowledge – is actually a knower in relation to the ignorant man who has not learnt anything, but potentially a knower in relation to the man who is exercising his knowledge. This possession or 'having' (of knowledge, for example), potential in one sense and active in another, is what Aristotle seems to mean by *hexis*, and since a person can pass from having a certain amount of knowledge to having more or indeed less of it, this having or *hexis* is mutable.

When the metaphysical interpretation of the double law of habit is presented in Part II of the text, Ravaissou argues that habit must be explained by the transformation of a potentiality – that is to say, a *power* of moving or of acting – into a *tendency* to move or act in a particular way. The continuity or repetition of a movement 'gradually transforms the potentiality, the virtuality, into a tendency, and gradually the tendency is transformed into action' (p. 55). It is by means of this idea of tendency that Ravaissou interprets *hexis* actively, and here he exhibits the influence of Leibniz's conception of being as active force. For Leibniz, 'active force contains a certain act or *entelechia* and is thus mid-way between the faculty of acting and the act itself and it involves a *conatus*'.²⁷ Active force is not just a capacity but is rather a drive or tendency, which will always realize itself, will lead into genuine activity, as long as there is nothing to impede its actualization. This informs Leibniz's interpretation of the law of inertia, according to which a body 'has a tendency to persevere in whatever sequence of changes it has begun'.²⁸ For Ravaissou, the 'desire' or 'unreflective spontaneity' that manifests itself in habit as a tendency to maintain sensory equilibrium, or as a tendency to repeat actions, is an expression of this Leibnizian principle of inertia, understood as a being's 'tendency to persist in its way of being' (p. 25).

Ravaissou states that through the progress of habit 'the *idea* becomes *being*', insofar as the goal or final cause of an action and the movement towards this become fused together in an 'immediate intelligence'. This refusal to confine intelligence and freedom to a disembodied faculty of reflective thought and will entails a radical critique of mechanistic conceptions of the body. If *hexis* signifies a 'way of being', it is a way of being of the body, which is not the mere mechanism or material thing envisaged by

Descartes and Kant, but intrinsically active and dynamic. If, through habit, 'the idea becomes being', this is a process that involves the body and its movements: 'it is . . . *within* the immediate organs of movements that the inclinations constituting the habit are formed, and the ideas are realised. Such inclinations, such ideas become more and more the form, the way of being, even the very being of these organs' (pp. 55–7).

Ravaisson also takes from Leibniz the principle of continuity that is central to *Of Habit*. As habit turns voluntary movements into involuntary or instinctive movements 'by a succession of imperceptible degrees', it reveals the continuity between the will and nature. This continuity is expressed in the phrases 'more and more', 'less and less' (*plus en plus, moins en moins*), which occur so often in the text that they are, as Jean Beaufret puts it, '*tout Ravaisson*', a signature of his thought.²⁹ According to Ravaisson, the fact that habitual movements are still intelligent – that is to say, they still incline towards a goal – even when they cease to be voluntary shows that the whole range of human functions, right down to the depths of unconsciousness, is characterized by a spontaneous or unreflective intelligence.

In finding continuity throughout the human being, Ravaisson is not denying that there is a meaningful difference between will and instinct, nor indeed between each of these and habit: will and instinct, or nature, are two poles, two extremities, two 'limits' at opposing ends of a spectrum. In this sense they are distinct, but they are not incommensurable opposites, and it is the movement of habit between them that makes this evident: 'habit is the dividing line, or the middle term, between will and nature; but it is a moving middle term, a dividing line that is always moving, and which advances by an imperceptible progress from one extremity to the other' (p. 59). For Ravaisson, this movement of habit from will to nature can, as a temporal process, illuminate a continuity that cannot be grasped, in spatial terms, by the understanding. The different degrees of consciousness and will traversed *in time* by the progress of habit turn out to be *simultaneously present* throughout an entire movement, elements of which are completely instinctive; for example, the most voluntary movement involves contracting certain muscles that we are not even conscious of, and which are beyond the control of the will. By analogy, this continuous, unbroken spectrum can be conceived as characteristic of nature itself, as a whole.

Ravaisson's interpretation of nature follows from his interpretation of human nature, as revealed by reflection on habit. If the progress of habit is towards the limit term of nature, at one extremity of the continuum, then the fusion or 'immediation' accomplished by habit can be attributed to

nature: 'the final degree of habit meets nature itself. Hence nature is, as this final degree, merely the immediation of the end and the principle, of the reality and ideality of movement, or of change in general, in the spontaneity of desire' (p. 61). This desire, which Ravaissou identifies as '*nature* itself', precedes the will and constitutes its source. If the result of habit is the idea becoming being, the increasing predominance of final causes over efficient or mechanical causes, then the being of nature is already ideal, already animated by a *telos*. Ultimately, nature's 'way of being' is not only desire but love, 'which possesses and desires at the same time'. This conclusion, as Ravaissou indicates, concurs with Christian theology, although it is reached without any appeal to religious doctrine.

Ravaissou's method and the structure of the text

In bringing together the ideas of different philosophers – Aristotle, Leibniz, Maine de Biran and Kant – *Of Habit* exhibits the influence of Victor Cousin's 'eclecticism'. For Cousin, eclecticism is an approach to political and religious thought as well as to philosophy: it represents a spirit of compromise, and a willingness to recognize elements of truth in different and opposing views. In the philosophical sphere, Cousin's eclecticism attempts to integrate elements of the four schools of thought he identifies: sensualism, mysticism, idealism and scepticism, each of which, he argues, has some legitimacy, but does not adequately express the whole truth. Of course, the 'eclectic' method may be more or less philosophical – less so when different ideas are simply juxtaposed, more so when they are combined into a coherent system – and in his 1867 report on French philosophy Ravaissou is critical of the anachronisms and limitations involved in Cousin's approach. *Of Habit* is perhaps at its most 'eclectic' in its attempt to bring together the ideas of a wide range of physiologists and medical theorists: Ravaissou is much more concerned with what unifies eighteenth-century vitalism, Stahl's animism and even Renaissance medicine than with the differences between these doctrines. This approach allows him to retrieve valuable insights from the discredited ideas of thinkers such as Van Helmont, and, as Jean Baruzi has noted, 'this ability to divine the creative inspiration, even in doctrines that he knows to be overcharged with mythology, is fundamental to Ravaissou's work'. The influence of eclecticism on *Of Habit* may present a challenge to the modern reader, who is confronted, at some points in the text, with allusions to, rather than arguments for, the conclusions of various thinkers.

However, Ravaissou synthesizes these diverse sources so coherently and elegantly that the result, exceeding the sum of its parts, is an interpretation of habit that breaks new philosophical ground.

Not only does Ravaissou approach the question of habit through reading the history of philosophy and science in a certain way, but he advances the entirely original claim that habit itself provides a method by which to grasp the relationship between nature and the will. This contrasts with the much more common view that habit is an obstacle to knowledge; when Proust writes that 'if habit is a second nature, it prevents us from knowing our first', he gives eloquent expression to the standard position concerning the relationship between habit and philosophical method.³⁰ According to Ravaissou, habit allows us to think beyond the Kantian antinomy between freedom and nature, because it shows that these two terms are opposed only in abstraction from a more profound continuum. He thus argues that 'habit is an acquired nature, a *second nature* that has its ultimate ground in primitive nature, but which alone explains the latter to the understanding' (p. 59). The epigraph to the text, taken from Aristotle's *On Memory and Recollection*, hints at this interpretation of habit: although '*hospes gar phusis ede to ethos*' is usually translated as 'habit is a second nature', it means, more literally, that habit is like nature.

Ravaissou's thesis in *Of Habit* involves two methodological steps: reflection on the phenomena of habit reveals continuity throughout the human being, from will to bodily instinct, and then by analogy this continuity is located in nature as a whole. For Ravaissou, this is, 'properly speaking, the method of high philosophy, of metaphysics . . . This intimate constitution of our being, which consciousness allows us to know, is found, by analogy, to reside elsewhere, and then everywhere'.³¹ Continuity cannot be observed directly in the hierarchy of beings – presented in Part I of the text – because we do not see the 'dispositions or powers' of other beings, and thus the continuity of nature 'is only a possibility, an ideality that cannot be demonstrated in nature itself'. However, this ideality can be known 'by the most powerful of analogies', for it 'is presented in the reality of the progression of habit' (p. 65). In a sense, the link between analogy and continuity is circular: the continuity of nature is 'proved' through analogical reasoning, but on the other hand the use of this method is justified by the supposition of unity, and thus continuity, throughout nature. The same problem occurs in Leibniz's thought, which is the source of this aspect of Ravaissou's argument.

The structure of the text does not follow the order of the methodological steps we have just outlined: only as we approach the end of the text

do we see that a phenomenology of habit underlies Ravaisson's philosophy of nature, for it is the exploration of 'second nature' accomplished in Part II that reveals the character of 'primary nature' as described in Part I. Although Ravaisson starts by moving up the hierarchy of being, from homogenous matter to vegetal, animal and finally human forms of life, he later tells us that it is by following the *descent* of habit down this hierarchy – which, he suggests, 'is like a spiral' – that the hidden depths of nature can be brought to light.

We might say, then, that *Of Habit* reads backwards from its conclusion to the process through which that conclusion is reached. We might also say that Ravaisson begins and ends at the same place: his first sentence defines habit as 'a general and permanent way of being', and Part I, Section I starts with the assertion that 'the universal law, the fundamental character of a being, is the tendency to persist in its way of being'; the text concludes with the claim that the unity of habit (or disposition) and its principle can be equated with 'the primordial law and the most general form of being, the tendency to persevere in the very actuality that constitutes being'. In the light of Ravaisson's method, it is the beginning that repeats the end, and not the other way around. The fact that *Of Habit* is framed by these claims about 'being' indicates the ontological orientation of the text as a whole, and suggests that the various philosophical methods employed by its author are directed towards uncovering the being of beings.

Ravaisson's legacy

The article on spiritualism in André Lalande's *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie* includes an entry by Jules Lachelier, who remarks that although any doctrine that recognizes the primacy of spirit and refuses to reduce nature to material principles might be described as spiritualist, such doctrines can be distinguished from the more profound spiritualism of Ravaisson. Lachelier was professor of philosophy at the École Normale for eleven years during the 1860s and 70s, and the author of *Du fondement de l'induction* (1871) and various essays, including *Psychology et métaphysique* (1885) and *Notes sur le pari de Pascal* (1901). Lachelier was a Kantian, but also a great admirer of Ravaisson and a proponent of his anti-mechanistic interpretation of nature: *Du fondement de l'induction* argues for 'a spiritualist realism, in the eyes of which every being is a force, and every force a thought which tends to a more and more complete consciousness of itself'.³² The

book ends with the assertion that 'the realm of final causes, penetrating without destroying that of efficient causes, substitutes everywhere force for inertia, life for death and liberty for fatalism'.

Three years after Lachelier published his work on induction, one of his students, Émile Boutroux, published his doctoral thesis, *La contingence des lois de la nature*. Boutroux went on to teach at the École Normale, and then from 1886 to 1902 occupied the chair of philosophy at the Sorbonne. In the early 1900s he delivered the Gifford Lectures in Glasgow, under the title 'Nature and Spirit'. Boutroux's philosophy is influenced by Ravaisson's spiritualism: he shares the latter's hierarchical ontology, and denies that higher levels of being can be understood in terms of lower levels; he posits a creative, teleological process at work throughout nature; and his argument for the contingency of natural laws is based on the assertion that there is spontaneity even at the level of apparently lifeless matter. Boutroux also draws on Ravaisson's analysis of habit, suggesting that 'animal instinct, life, physical and mechanical forces are, as it were, habits that have penetrated more and more deeply into the spontaneity of being. Hence these habits have become almost unconquerable. Seen from without, they appear as necessary laws'.³³

Ravaisson clearly exercised a significant influence on Henri Bergson, both directly – as Bergson's lecture commemorating his life and works demonstrates – and indirectly, via other spiritualist thinkers. Boutroux taught Bergson at the École Normale in the 1870s, and in 1889 Bergson dedicated his first major work, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*, to Lachelier. One point of contact between Bergson and Ravaisson is the claim, fundamental to Bergson's philosophy, that the intellect misrepresents the nature of time – conceived as lived duration – and thus the nature of reality. According to Bergson, 'real time, regarded as flux, or, in other words, the very mobility of being, escapes the hold of scientific knowledge'.³⁴ The view that the understanding is limited by its requirement of spatial representation is presented in several places in *Of Habit*, most notably in Part II, Section I: 'continuity can be grasped by the understanding only on the basis of co-existence . . . the understanding represents quantity to itself only in . . . the intuition of space' (p. 39). Arthur Lovejoy argues that Bergson's thesis concerning time is implicit in Ravaisson's analysis of the knowing subject: 'If – as Bergson habitually assumes – what Ravaisson said about the inter-relations of the notions of co-existence, space, quantity and number, is true, then assuredly time is no quantity in the ordinary sense . . . Bergson's *durée réelle* was generated simply by the drawing of [the] manifest consequence [of this]'.³⁵

On the question of habit, Bergson departs from Ravaissou in regarding habit in more dualistic terms, as opposed to freedom and creative life. This is suggested, in fact, by his somewhat inaccurate claim that for Ravaissou habit is a mechanism, and that mechanism is 'the fossilised residue of a spiritual activity' – a metaphor which implies that habit is lifeless, inert.³⁶ Here, Bergson seems to attribute his own view to Ravaissou, although elsewhere he concedes that his interpretation of freedom differs from that of earlier spiritualists.³⁷ For Bergson, life's creation of a new form and the shaping or determination of this form are 'two distinct and often antagonistic movements', even though there is continuity between them. Human freedom, then, 'in the very movements by which it is affirmed, creates the growing habits that will stifle it if it fails to renew itself by a constant effort: it is dogged by automatism'.³⁸ Bergson's dualism may not be absolute, but he nevertheless places habit on one side of a division between two aspects of the human being – between, for example, pure memory and habit memory; between the 'deep-seated' durational self and the 'crust' of habit³⁹ – whereas for Ravaissou habit is the 'mobile middle term' between two ends of a continuum.

Merleau-Ponty and Ricœur are more faithful than Bergson to Ravaissou's claim that reflection on habit leads to a refutation of mechanism. Moreover, Ravaissou's search for a middle way between empiricism and idealism anticipates the work of the French phenomenologists. In *Habit* this middle way involves overcoming mind-body dualism and recognizes, in habit, the phenomenon of embodied intelligence: habit in reaching down into the body animates it with purposiveness, which is the sign of freedom and intelligence; the organic body is inseparable from its movements, and these movements become inseparable from their *telos*. The role of habit in the formation of the 'lived body' is described in detail by Merleau-Ponty in *The Phenomenology of Perception* (1945). Habit, he writes here, is 'knowledge in the hands'; 'it is the body which understands in the acquisition of habit'. Such a statement requires us to question the view that understanding is a mental, theoretical activity, and also to let go of the idea that the body is an object, for 'the phenomenon of habit is just what prompts us to revise our notion of "understand" and our notion of the body. To understand is to experience the harmony between what we aim at and what is given, between the intention and the performance – and the body is our anchorage in a world'.⁴⁰ It is not difficult to see the parallels between these claims and Ravaissou's description of the body as formed by habit.

Ricœur discusses Ravaisson's analysis of habit extensively in his 1950 book *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, and returns to it in later texts such as *Fallible Man* (1960) and *Oneself as Another* (1990). In taking up the interpretations of habit presented by both Ravaisson and Bergson, these texts draw out the ambiguity and ambivalence of habit. Habits may be forms of 'automatism' or 'mechanism', and thus opposed to freedom, but Ricœur argues that this is not the normal character of habit but rather its 'degradation'. Indeed, Ravaisson implies something similar when he discusses 'tics', a sort of pathological case of habit. According to Ricœur,

the process of automatization . . . is the counterpart of the spirit of appropriateness, of inventiveness and of exuberance of habit. Habit is at the same time a living spontaneity *and* an imitation of the automaton, reversion to the thing. Already here there are two closely interrelated series of facts which support two types of understanding, in terms of life *and* in terms of the machine: in terms of spontaneity *and* in terms of inertia.⁴¹

He follows Ravaisson in using the concept of inertia to make sense of the relationship between freedom and nature: 'it seems as though in our body we participate in an obscure ground of inertia of the universe. In becoming natural, to use Ravaisson's terminology, freedom submits to "the primordial law and most general form of being, the tendency to persist in the act which constitutes being"'.⁴²

Editorial note

In the footnotes Ravaisson is inconsistent in his adherence to nineteenth-century bibliographical conventions. While the French text (conforming to the Alcan edition of 1933) remains unaltered, in the English translation some details in the footnotes have been changed or added in order to orient the reader: we have, for example, translated the Greek and Latin quotations, and where necessary corrected them in accordance with the original sources; translated many of the Latin bibliographical abbreviations; spelt out in full all Latin titles; corrected some inaccuracies or anachronisms in the titles; and referred when possible to English-language editions of the texts cited. Full bibliographical details concerning all texts and editions cited are given in the Bibliography.

The responsibility for any errors is purely our own, but our thanks are due to Mike Garfield at Manchester Metropolitan University and to Julien

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

Abriel in Paris for their advice concerning matters Latin and French respectively.

Clare Carlisle and Mark Sinclair
Manchester, March 2008

De l'habitude
Félix Ravaisson

Of Habit
Félix Ravaisson

" Ὅσπερ γὰρ φύσις ἡδὴ τὸ ἔθος
Aristote, *De Mem.*

I

L'habitude, dans le sens le plus étendu, est la manière d'être générale et permanente, l'état d'une existence considérée, soit dans l'ensemble de ses éléments, soit dans la succession de ses époques.

L'habitude acquise est celle qui est la conséquence d'un changement.

Mais ce qu'on entend spécialement par l'*habitude*, et ce qui fait le sujet de ce travail, ce n'est pas seulement l'habitude acquise, mais l'habitude contractée, par suite d'un changement, à l'égard de ce changement même qui lui a donné naissance.

Or, si l'habitude, une fois acquise, est une manière d'être générale, permanente, et si le changement est passager, l'habitude subsiste au-delà du changement dont elle est le résultat. En outre, si elle ne se rapporte, en tant qu'elle est une habitude, et par son essence même, qu'au changement qui l'a engendrée, l'habitude subsiste pour un changement qui n'est plus et qui n'est pas encore, pour un changement possible; c'est là le signe même auquel elle doit être reconnue. Ce n'est donc pas seulement un état, mais une disposition, une vertu.

Enfin, à l'exception du changement qui fait passer l'être du néant à l'existence, ou de l'existence au néant, tout changement s'accomplit dans un temps; or ce qui engendre dans l'être une habitude, ce n'est pas le changement, en tant qu'il modifie l'être seulement, mais en tant qu'il s'accomplit dans le temps. L'habitude a d'autant plus de force, que la modification qui l'a produite se prolonge ou se répète davantage. L'habitude est donc une disposition, à l'égard d'un changement, engendrée dans un être par la continuité ou la répétition de ce même changement.

Rien n'est donc susceptible d'habitude que ce qui est susceptible de changement; mais tout ce qui est susceptible de changement n'est pas par cela seul susceptible d'habitude. Le corps change de lieu; mais on a beau lancer un corps cent fois de suite dans la même direction, avec la même vitesse, il n'en contracte pas pour cela une habitude; il reste toujours le même qu'il était à l'égard de ce mouvement après qu'on le lui a imprimé cent fois.¹ L'habitude n'implique pas seulement la mutabilité; elle n'implique pas seulement la mutabilité en quelque chose qui dure sans changer; elle suppose un changement dans la disposition, dans la puissance, dans la

‘Habit is a second nature.’
Aristotle, *On Memory and Recollection*

I

Habit, in the widest sense, is a general and permanent way of being, the state of an existence considered either as the unity of its elements or as the succession of its different phases.

An acquired habit is the consequence of a change.

But what we especially intend by the word ‘habit’, which is the subject of this study, is not simply acquired habit, but habit that is contracted, owing to a change, with respect to the very change that gave birth to it.

Now, once acquired, habit is a general, permanent way of being, and if change is transitory, habit subsists beyond the change which brought it about. Moreover, if it is related, insofar as it is habit and by its very essence, only to the change that engendered it, then habit remains for a change which either is no longer or is not yet; it remains for a possible change. This is its defining characteristic. Habit is not, therefore, merely a state, but a disposition, a virtue.

With the exception of change that brings something from nothing into existence or from existence to nothingness, all change is realized in time; and what brings a habit into being is not simply change understood as modifying the thing, but change understood as occurring in time. Habit has all the more force when the modification that produced it is further prolonged or repeated. Habit is thus a disposition relative to change, which is engendered in a being by the continuity or the repetition of this very same change.

Nothing, then, is capable of habit that is not capable of change; but everything capable of change is not by that fact alone capable of habit. A body changes place; but if we throw a body 100 times in the same direction, with the same speed, it still does not contract a habit; it still remains the same as it was with regard to the movement that has been imparted to it 100 times.¹ Habit implies more than mere mutability; it does not simply imply mutability in something that remains without changing; it supposes a change in the disposition, in the potential, in the internal virtue of that in which the change occurs, which itself does not change.

vertu intérieure de ce en quoi le changement se passe, et qui ne change point.

I. La loi universelle, le caractère fondamental de l'être, est la tendance à persister dans sa manière d'être.

Les conditions sous lesquelles l'être nous apparaît sur la scène du monde, sont l'Espace et le Temps.

L'espace est la condition et la forme la plus apparente et la plus élémentaire de la stabilité, ou de la permanence; le temps, la condition universelle du changement. Le changement le plus simple, comme le plus général, est aussi celui qui est relatif à l'espace même, ou le mouvement.

La forme la plus élémentaire de l'existence est donc l'*étendue mobile*; c'est ce qui constitue le caractère général du *corps*.

Si tout être tend à persister dans son être, toute étendue mobile, tout mobile (car il n'y a de mobile que ce qui est étendu) persiste dans son mouvement; il y persiste avec une énergie précisément égale à la quantité de ce mouvement même; cette tendance à persévérer dans le mouvement est l'inertie.²

Dès le premier degré de l'existence se trouvent donc réunis: la permanence, le changement; et, dans le changement même, la tendance à la permanence.

Mais l'inertie n'est pas une puissance déterminée, susceptible d'être convertie en une disposition constante. C'est une puissance indéfiniment variable comme le mouvement même, et indéfiniment répandue dans l'infinité de la matière. Pour constituer une existence réelle, où l'habitude puisse prendre racine, il faut une unité réelle; il faut donc quelque chose qui, dans cette infinité de la matière, constitue, sous une forme ou sous une autre, l'unité, l'identité. Tels sont les principes qui déterminent, sous des formes de plus en plus compliquées et de plus en plus particulières, la synthèse des éléments, depuis l'union extérieure dans l'espace jusqu'aux combinaisons les plus intimes, depuis la synthèse mécanique de la pesanteur et de l'attraction moléculaire jusqu'à la synthèse la plus profonde des affinités chimiques.

Mais, dans toute l'étendue de ce premier règne de la nature; ou les éléments qui s'unissent ne changent, en s'unissant, que de rapports entre eux; ou ils s'annulent réciproquement, en se faisant équilibre; ou ils se transforment en une résultante commune, différente des éléments. Le premier de ces trois degrés est l'union mécanique, le second, l'union physique (par exemple des deux électricités), le troisième, l'union, la combinaison chimique.

Dans les trois cas, nous ne voyons pas de changement qui s'accomplisse dans un temps mesurable. Entre ce qui pouvait être et ce qui est, nous ne voyons pas de milieu, aucun intervalle; c'est un passage immédiat de la puissance à

I. The universal law, the fundamental character of a being, is the tendency to persist in its way of being.

The conditions under which being is represented to us in the world are Space and Time.

Space is the condition and the most apparent and elementary form of stability, of permanence; time is the universal condition of change. The simplest change, and the most general, is also that which is relative to space itself, namely movement.

The most elementary form of existence is thus the *extended mobile*; this is what constitutes the general character of *body*.

If every thing tends to persist in its being, every extended mobile, every mobile (for there can be only extended mobiles) persists in its movement; it perseveres in it with an energy that is exactly equal to the quantity of this movement itself. This tendency to persist in movement is inertia.²

From the lowest level of existence the following are found together: permanence; change; and, in change itself, a tendency towards permanence.

But inertia is not a determinate power able to be converted into a constant disposition. It is an infinitely variable power like movement itself, and indefinitely spread throughout the infinity of matter. In order to constitute a real existence where habit can take root, there must be a real unity; there must, therefore, be something within the infinity of matter that, in one form or another, constitutes unity, identity. Such are the principles that determine, in increasingly complicated and particular forms, the synthesis of elements: from external union in space to the most intimate combinations, from the mechanical synthesis of gravity and molecular attraction to the deepest synthesis of chemical affinities.

But, in the whole of this primary realm of nature, either the elements that come together, in coming together, change only the relations between themselves; or they reciprocally annul each other in balancing each other out; or they are transformed into a common result, different to the elements. The first of these three degrees is mechanical union; the second, physical union (of, for example, two electricities); the third, chemical union or combination.

In all three cases, the change does not seem to occur in a measurable time. Between what could be and what is, we see no milieu, no interval; there is an immediate passage from potentiality to actuality; and, beyond actuality, no potentiality remains that is distinguished from it and that outlives it. Here, then, there is no durable change that can give birth to habit, and no permanent potentiality in which it could establish itself.

l'acte; et, hors de l'acte, il ne demeure pas de puissance qui en soit distinguée et qui y survive. Il n'y a donc point là de changement durable qui puisse donner naissance à l'habitude, et de puissance permanente où elle trouve à s'établir.

En outre, le résultat et le signe de la réalisation immédiate de leurs puissances en un acte commun, c'est que toutes les différences des parties constituantes disparaissent dans l'uniformité du tout; mécanique, physique ou chimique, la synthèse est parfaitement homogène.

Or, quelle qu'ait été la diversité originelle de ses éléments constitutifs, un tout homogène est toujours indéfiniment divisible en parties intégrantes semblables entre elles et semblables au tout. Si loin que pénètre la division, elle ne trouve pas l'indivisible. La chimie cherche vainement l'atome, qui recule à l'infini. L'homogénéité exclut donc l'individualité; elle exclut l'unité véritable, et par conséquent le véritable être. Dans un tout homogène il y a de l'être, sans doute, mais il n'y a pas un être.

En toute synthèse homogène, il n'y a qu'une existence indéfiniment divisible et multiple, sous l'empire de forces diffuses, où le fait semble se confondre avec la loi, et la loi avec la cause dans l'uniformité d'une nécessité générale. Il n'y a point là de substance déterminée et d'énergie individuelle où la puissance réside, et où puisse s'établir et se conserver une habitude.

L'habitude n'est donc pas possible dans cet empire de l'immédiation et de l'homogénéité qui forme le règne Inorganique.

II. Dès que le changement qui opère la synthèse dans la nature n'est plus une réunion ou une combinaison immédiate, dès qu'il y a un temps mesurable entre la fin et le principe, la synthèse n'est plus homogène. Comme il faut, pour y arriver, une suite d'intermédiaires dans le temps, de même il faut dans l'espace un ensemble de moyens, il faut des instruments, des organes. Cette unité hétérogène dans l'espace, c'est l'Organisation. Cette unité successive dans le temps, c'est la Vie; or, avec la succession et l'hétérogénéité, l'individualité commence. Un tout hétérogène ne se divise plus en parties semblables entre elles et semblables au tout. Ce n'est plus seulement de l'être, c'est un être.

C'est donc, à ce qu'il semble, un seul et même sujet, une substance déterminée qui développe, sous des formes et à des époques diverses, sa puissance intérieure. Ici paraissent réunies à la fois, du même coup, toutes les conditions de l'habitude.

Avec la vie commence l'individualité. Le caractère général de la vie, c'est donc qu'au milieu du monde elle forme un monde à part, un et indivisible. Les choses inorganisées, les corps, sont livrés sans réserve et immédiatement soumis aux influences du dehors, qui font leur existence même. Ce sont des

Moreover, the result and the sign of the immediate realization of their potentialities in a single actuality is that all the differences of the constitutive parts disappear in the uniformity of the whole; mechanical, physical or chemical, the synthesis is perfectly homogenous.

Even if its constitutive elements were diverse, a homogenous whole is always infinitely divisible into parts that are similar to each other and similar to the whole. No matter how far division goes, it will not find the indivisible. Chemistry searches in vain for the atom, which recedes infinitely. Homogeneity therefore excludes individuality; it excludes veritable unity, and consequently veritable being. In a homogenous whole there is doubtless being, but there is not a being.

In every homogenous synthesis, there is only existence that is infinitely divisible and multiple, in the grip of diverse forces, where fact seems to be confused with law, and law with causality in the uniformity of a general necessity. Here, there is no determinate substance and no individual energy where potentiality could reside, and where a habit could be established and conserved.

Hence habit is not possible within this empire of immediacy and homogeneity that is the Inorganic realm.

II. As soon as the change effecting synthesis in nature is no longer an immediate reunion or combination, as soon as there is measurable time between the end and the principle, the synthesis is no longer homogenous. Just as there must be a succession of intermediaries in time for the synthesis to be realized, so there must also be instruments, organs. This heterogeneous unity in space is Organization. This successive unity in time is Life – but with succession and heterogeneity, individuality begins. A heterogeneous whole can no longer be divided into parts that are similar to each other and to the whole. It is no longer simply being; it is a being.

Hence it is apparently one and the same subject, a determinate substance that develops, in diverse forms and within different temporal periods, its internal potentiality. Here all the conditions for habit seem to come together at once.

With life begins individuality. The general character of life is that in the milieu of the world it forms a world apart that is singular and indivisible. Unorganized things, bodies, are delivered over without reserve and immediately subjugated to outside influences that constitute their very existence. These are completely external existences, subject to the general laws of a common necessity. Every living being, in contrast, has its own path, its own

existences tout extérieures, assujetties aux lois générales d'une nécessité commune. Au contraire, tout être vivant a sa destinée propre, son essence particulière, sa nature constante au milieu du changement. Sans doute, tout ce qui change est dans la nature, comme tout ce qui est est dans l'être. Mais seul, l'être vivant est une nature distincte, comme seul il est un être. C'est donc dans le principe de la vie que consiste proprement la nature comme l'être.

Le règne inorganique peut donc être considéré, en ce sens, comme l'empire du Destin, le règne organique comme l'empire de la Nature.

Ainsi l'habitude ne peut commencer que là où commence la nature elle-même.

Or, dès le premier degré de la vie, il semble que la continuité ou la répétition d'un changement modifie à l'égard de ce changement même, la disposition de l'être, et que, par cet endroit, elle modifie la nature.

La vie est supérieure à l'existence inorganique; mais par cela même elle la suppose comme sa condition. La forme la plus simple de l'être en est nécessairement aussi la plus générale; elle est par conséquent la condition de toute autre forme. L'organisation a donc dans le monde inorganique la matière à laquelle elle donne la forme. La synthèse hétérogène de l'organisme se résout, en dernière analyse, en des principes homogènes et, par conséquent, inorganiques. La vie n'est donc pas, dans le monde extérieur, un monde isolé et indépendant; elle y est enchaînée par ses conditions, et assujettie à ses lois générales. Elle subit sans cesse l'influence du dehors; seulement elle la surmonte et elle en triomphe sans cesse. Ainsi elle reçoit le changement par son rapport avec sa forme inférieure d'existence, qui est sa condition, ou sa matière; elle commence le changement, à ce qu'il semble, par la vertu supérieure qui est sa nature même. La vie implique l'opposition de la réceptivité et de la spontanéité.

Or l'effet général de la continuité et de la répétition du changement que l'être vivant reçoit d'ailleurs que de lui-même, c'est que, si ce changement ne va pas jusqu'à le détruire, il en est toujours de moins en moins altéré. Au contraire, plus l'être vivant a répété ou prolongé un changement qui a son origine en lui, plus encore il le produit et semble tendre à le reproduire. Le changement qui lui est venu du dehors lui devient donc de plus en plus étranger; le changement qui lui est venu de lui-même lui devient de plus en plus propre. La réceptivité diminue, la spontanéité augmente. Telle est la loi générale de la disposition, de l'habitude que la continuité ou la répétition du changement semble engendrer dans tout être vivant. Si donc le caractère de la nature, qui fait la vie, est la prédominance de la spontanéité sur la

particular essence; it has a constant nature in an environment of change. Doubtless, everything that changes is in nature, just as everything that exists is in being. Yet only the living being is a distinct nature, just as it alone is a being. It is therefore in the principle of life that nature, as well as being, properly subsists.

Hence the inorganic realm can be considered, in this sense, to be the empire of Destiny, whilst the organic realm can be considered to be the empire of Nature.

Habit, therefore, can only begin where nature itself begins.

From the lowest level of life, it seems that the continuity or repetition of a change modifies, relative to this change itself, the disposition of the being, and in this way modifies nature.

Life is superior to inorganic existence; but for this very reason life presupposes it as its condition. The simplest form of being is necessarily the most general; it is consequently the condition of all other forms. Hence it is in the inorganic world that organization finds the matter to which it gives form. The heterogeneous synthesis of the organism resolves itself, in the final analysis, into homogenous, and consequently inorganic, principles. Hence life is not an independent and isolated world within the outer world; it is brought about by the conditions and subjected to the general laws of this outer world. Life continually suffers external influences; and yet it nevertheless surmounts them and endlessly triumphs over them. In this way it undergoes change through its relation to its inferior form of existence, which is its condition, its matter; it initiates change, it would appear, by the superior virtue which is its very nature. Life implies the opposition of receptivity and spontaneity.

The general effect of the continuity and repetition of change that the living being receives from something other than itself is that, if the change does not destroy it, it is always less and less altered by that change. Conversely, the more the living being has repeated or prolonged a change that it has originated, the more it produces the change and seems to tend to reproduce it. The change that has come to it from the outside becomes more and more foreign to it; the change that it has brought upon itself becomes more and more proper to it. Receptivity diminishes and spontaneity increases. Such is the general law of the disposition, of the habit, that the continuity or the repetition of change seems to engender in every living being. If, therefore, the characteristic of nature, which constitutes life, is the predominance of spontaneity over receptivity, then habit does not simply presuppose nature, but develops in the very direction of nature, and concurs with it.

réceptivité, l'habitude ne suppose pas seulement la nature; elle se développe dans la direction même de la nature; elle abonde dans le même sens.

Tant que l'organisation s'éloigne peu de l'homogénéité inorganique, tant que la cause de la vie est, sinon multiple et diffuse, du moins encore près de l'être, tant que les transformations en sont peu nombreuses, en un mot, tant que la puissance dont la vie est la manifestation n'a qu'un petit nombre de degrés à parcourir pour atteindre sa fin, l'existence est à peine affranchie de la nécessité, et l'habitude y pénètre difficilement. L'habitude n'a que peu d'accès dans la vie végétale. Cependant la durée du changement laisse déjà des traces durables, non seulement dans la constitution matérielle de la plante, mais dans la forme supérieure de sa vie. Les plantes les plus sauvages cèdent à la culture:

. . . Haec quoque si quis

Inserat aut scrobibus mandet mutata subactis,

Exuerint siluestrem animum, cultuque frequenti,

In quascumque voces artes haud tarda sequuntur.³

III. Mais la végétation n'est pas la forme la plus élevée de la vie. Au-dessus de la vie végétale,⁴ il y a la vie animale. Or, un degré de vie supérieur implique une plus grande variété de métamorphoses, une organisation plus compliquée, une hétérogénéité supérieure. Dès lors il y faut des éléments plus divers; pour que l'être les absorbe en sa propre substance, il faut qu'il les prépare et les transforme.⁵ Pour cela il faut qu'il les approche de quelque organe qui y soit propre. Il faut donc qu'il se meuve, au moins par parties, dans l'espace extérieur. Il faut enfin qu'il y ait quelque chose en lui sur quoi les objets extérieurs fassent quelque impression, de quelque nature qu'elle soit, mais qui détermine les mouvements convenables. Telles sont les conditions les plus générales de la vie animale.

Or, à mesure qu'on s'élève dans l'échelle des êtres, on voit se multiplier et se définir les rapports de l'existence avec les deux conditions de la permanence et du changement dans la nature, l'espace et le temps; et la permanence et le changement sont les conditions premières de l'habitude.

La loi élémentaire de l'existence est l'étendue, sans forme ni grandeur définies, avec la mobilité indéfinie; c'est le caractère général du corps. La première forme qui le détermine est la figure définie dans sa forme, et la mobilité définie dans sa direction; c'est le caractère général du minéral (solide). La première forme de la vie est le développement, l'accroissement dans l'espace, défini en direction et en grandeur, sous la figure définie dans sa

For as long as organization distances itself only slightly from inorganic homogeneity, for as long as the cause of life is, if not multiple and diffuse, at least still close to being, for as long as its transformations are few and far between – in a word, for as long as the power whose manifestation is life has only a few levels to ascend in order to attain its goal, then existence is scarcely freed from necessity, and habit enters into it only with difficulty. Habit has only marginal access to vegetal life. However, the duration of change here already leaves traces, not only in the material constitution of the plant, but also in the superior form of its life. The wildest plants yield to cultivation:

. . . And yet,
 even these, should one graft them
 or transplant them into well-prepared beds,
 will outgrow their savagery, and under ceaseless training,
 will soon follow your call in whatever ways you wish.³

III. But vegetation is not the highest form of life. Above vegetal life stands animal life.⁴ A superior degree of life, however, implies a greater variety of metamorphoses, a more complicated organization, a higher heterogeneity. Consequently, there must be more diverse elements; for the being to absorb them into its own substance, it must prepare and transform them.⁵ To do so, it must approach them with a suitable organ. Hence it must move, at least in parts, in external space. Ultimately, there must be something – whatever its nature might be – in the being that allows external objects to make an impression on it, and which consequently determines the appropriate movements. Such are the most general conditions of animal life.

As one moves up the hierarchy of beings, the relations of existence with the two conditions of permanence and change in nature, namely space and time, are multiplied and defined – and permanence and change are the first conditions of habit.

The elementary law of existence is extension, without determinate form or size, and with an indeterminate mobility; this is the general character of body. The first form determining body is the figure defined in its shape, and mobility defined in its direction; this is the general character of the mineral (solids). The first form of life is development, growth in space, defined in both direction and magnitude, in a figure that is also defined in its shape and magnitude; this is vegetal life. The general character and the most apparent sign of animal life is movement in space. This series of relations to space and movement is linked with a series of analogous relations to time. Body exists

grandeur comme dans sa forme; c'est la vie végétale. Enfin, le caractère général et le signe le plus apparent de la vie animale est le mouvement dans l'espace. A cette suite de rapports avec l'espace et le mouvement se lie une suite de rapports analogues avec le temps. Le corps existe sans rien devenir; il est en quelque sorte hors du temps. La vie végétale veut un certain temps qu'elle remplit de sa continuité. La vie animale n'est plus continue; toutes ses fonctions ont des alternatives de repos et de mouvement; toutes sont intermittentes⁶ au moins dans la succession de la veille et du sommeil; les fonctions intermédiaires qui ont pour fin immédiate la préparation à la vie végétale sont assujetties à des périodes plus courtes et plus régulières.

L'existence inorganique n'a donc aucune relation définie avec le temps. La vie implique une durée définie continue; la vie animale, une durée définie, entrecoupée d'intervalles vides, et distinguée en périodes, un temps divisé et discret.

Or, c'est dans l'intermittence des fonctions que semble se manifester le plus clairement la spontanéité. Le caractère de la spontanéité est l'initiative du mouvement. L'initiative paraît évidente quand le mouvement recommence après avoir cessé, et en l'absence de toute cause interne. Il y faut, ce semble, plus de force aussi et plus d'effort pour soulever la matière affaissée et retombée sur elle-même.

Dès le premier degré de la vie animale commence en effet à se manifester hautement la double influence de la seule durée du changement. Les éléments qui excitaient d'abord dans les organes une irritation extraordinaire cessent à la longue de l'exciter sans que rien semble changé dans la constitution même de l'organe. C'est un abaissement graduel de la réceptivité. D'un autre côté, les fluides vitaux soumis dans leur cours aux intermittences caractéristiques de la vie animale affluent de plus en plus, sans cause extérieure subsistante, au moins en apparence, dans les parties où ils ont été appelés. Ils y affluent aux mêmes époques. L'habitude se révèle comme la spontanéité dans la régularité des périodes. Si la veine a été ouverte plus d'une fois à des intervalles de temps réguliers, après les mêmes intervalles le sang s'y porte et s'y accumule de lui-même.⁷ L'inflammation, le spasme, la convulsion ont leurs retours réglés, sans aucune apparence de cause déterminante dans le matériel de l'organisme.⁸ Toute fièvre dont le hasard a ramené les accès à des intervalles égaux tend à se convertir en une affection périodique; la périodicité devient de son essence. Tout cela, c'est une exaltation graduelle de la spontanéité.

IV. Si l'on s'élève d'un degré de plus dans la vie, l'être ne se meut plus seulement par parties, il se meut tout entier dans l'espace; il change de lieu. En

without becoming anything; it is in some sense outside of time. Vegetal life requires a certain time which it fills with its continuity. Animal life is no longer continuous: all its functions have alternatives of rest and movement; all are intermittent⁶ at least in the succession of wakefulness and sleep; the intermediate functions whose immediate goal is preparatory in vegetal life are subject to shorter and more regular periods.

Inorganic existence has, therefore, no definite relation with time. Life implies a determinate, continuous duration. Animal life implies a defined duration, interspersed with empty intervals, and divided into periods; a time that is divided and discrete.

It is in the intermittency of functions that spontaneity seems to manifest itself most clearly. Spontaneity is the initiative of movement. Initiative seems evident when movement recommences after having ceased, and in the absence of any external cause. It seems that more force as well as more effort is needed to lift up matter that has collapsed and fallen back on itself.

From the lowest level of animal life the double influence of the duration of change begins to manifest itself clearly. In the long run, the elements that first provoked an extraordinary irritation in the organs cease to do so without anything seeming to have changed in the constitution of the organ. Receptivity gradually diminishes. On the other hand, the flow of vital fluids that is subject to the characteristic intermittency of animal life increases, apparently without any underlying external cause, in the parts to which they are drawn; they flow there at regular intervals. Habit reveals itself as spontaneity in the regularity of the periods. For example, if a vein is opened more than once at regular intervals, blood comes to move and accumulate there by itself with the same regularity.⁷ Inflammations, spasms, convulsions make regular reappearances without any appearance of a determining cause in the material of the organism.⁸ A fever that has come by chance to manifest itself in regular bouts tends to convert itself into a periodic affection; the periodicity becomes essential to it. All of this is a progressive exaltation of spontaneity.

IV. If we lift ourselves one degree higher within life, a being not only moves itself in its parts, but moves itself as a whole in space; it changes place. At the same time, new, additional organs are developed, which receive impressions of external objects from increasing distances. In this new phase, the contrast of receptivity and spontaneity is expressed with renewed force.

In the inorganic world, reaction is exactly equal to action; or, rather, in this completely external and superficial existence, action and reaction merge; it is one and the same actuality, from two different points of view. In

même temps s'ajoutent à ses organes des organes nouveaux qui reçoivent à des distances de plus en plus grandes l'impression des objets extérieurs. Dans ce nouveau période, se prononce avec une force nouvelle le contraste de la réceptivité et de la spontanéité.

En effet, dans le monde inorganique, la réaction est exactement égale à l'action, ou plutôt, dans cette existence tout extérieure et superficielle, l'action et la réaction se confondent; c'est un seul et même acte, à deux points de vue différents. Dans la vie, l'action du monde extérieur et la réaction de la vie elle-même deviennent de plus en plus différentes, et paraissent de plus en plus indépendantes l'une de l'autre. Dans la vie végétale, elles se ressemblent encore et s'enchaînent de près. Dès le premier degré de la vie animale, elles s'écartent et se différencient, et à des affections imperceptibles de la réceptivité répondent des agitations plus ou moins considérables dans l'espace. Mais aussitôt que l'animal se meut et se transporte tout entier, l'opposition de la réceptivité et de la spontanéité prend un caractère tout nouveau. Les objets extérieurs font impression sur les organes propres de cette réceptivité supérieure, par l'intermédiaire de fluides de plus en plus rares et subtils, l'air et l'éther, tandis que les mouvements qui semblent répondre à ces impressions sont de plus en plus amples, et de plus en plus compliqués.

La double loi de l'influence contraire de la durée du changement sur l'être, selon qu'il le subit seulement ou qu'il le commence, la double loi de l'habitude doit donc aussi se manifester ici par des traits plus sensibles et plus incontestables. Les impressions perdent leur force à mesure qu'elles se reproduisent davantage. Or, les impressions sont ici de plus en plus légères, et intéressent de moins en moins la constitution physique des organes. L'affaiblissement graduel de la réceptivité semble donc de plus en plus l'effet d'une cause hyperorganique. D'un autre côté, les mouvements sont de plus en plus disproportionnés aux impressions de la réceptivité. Le progrès du mouvement semble donc aussi de plus en plus indépendant dans son principe de l'altération matérielle de l'organisme.⁹

Mais si la réaction est de plus en plus éloignée et indépendante de l'action à laquelle elle répond, il semble que de plus en plus il faut un centre qui leur serve de commune limite, où l'une arrive et d'où l'autre parte; un centre réglant de plus en plus par lui-même, à sa manière, en son temps, le rapport de moins en moins immédiat et nécessaire de la réaction qu'il produit avec l'action qu'il a subie. Ce n'est pas assez d'un moyen terme indifférent comme le centre des forces opposées du levier; de plus en plus, il faut un centre qui, par sa propre vertu, mesure et dispense la force.¹⁰

life, the action of the external world and the reaction of life itself become increasingly different, and appear to be increasingly independent of one another. In vegetal life, the two still resemble each other and are closely bound together. From the first degree of animal life, however, they become more distant and differentiated, and more or less noticeable agitations in space respond to imperceptible affections of receptivity. But as soon as the animal moves and transports itself as a whole, the opposition of receptivity and spontaneity takes on a wholly new character. External objects make an impression on the organs proper to this higher receptivity by the intermediary of increasingly rare and subtle fluids, air and ether, whilst the movements that seem to respond to these impressions become broader and more complicated.

The double law of the contrary influence on beings of the duration of change, depending on whether the being merely suffers the change or sets it off – that is, the double law of habit – must manifest itself here by more apparent and incontestable characteristics. Impressions lose their force the more frequently they are produced. They become more and more slight, affecting the physical constitution of the organs less and less. The gradual weakening of receptivity seems more and more, therefore, to be the effect of a hyper-organic cause. From another perspective, the movements are increasingly disproportionate to the impressions of receptivity. The progress of movement in its principle seems, then, to become more independent of the material alteration of the organism.⁹

But if reactions are increasingly distanced from and independent of the actions to which they respond, then it seems that a centre is required to serve as a common limit: a centre at which reactions arrive and from which actions depart, and which comes to regulate by itself, in its own way and in its own time, the less and less immediate and necessary relation of the reaction that it produces with the action that it has suffered. This is not simply an indifferent middle term like the centre of opposing forces in a lever; it becomes increasingly necessary to have a centre with the capacity to measure and dispense force.¹⁰

What would such a measure be, if not a judge that knows, that values, that foresees and decides? What is this judge, if not the principle that is called the soul?

In this way the reign of knowledge, of foresight, seems to emerge in the realm of Nature, and thus the first light of Freedom seems to spring forth.

Certainly, these are still obscure, uncertain and contested signs – but life takes another, final step. Motive power arrives, along with the organs of

Que serait-ce donc qu'une semblable mesure, sinon un juge qui connaît, qui estime, qui prévoit et qui décide? Qu'est-ce que ce juge, sinon ce principe qu'on appelle l'âme?

Ainsi semble apparaître dans l'empire de la Nature le règne de la connaissance, de la prévoyance, et poindre la première lueur de la Liberté.

Cependant, ce sont des indices obscurs encore, incertains et contestés; mais la vie fait un dernier pas. La puissance motrice arrive, avec les organes du mouvement, au dernier degré de perfection. L'être, sorti, à l'origine, de la fatalité du monde mécanique, se manifeste, dans le monde mécanique, sous la forme accomplie de la plus libre activité. Or, cet être, c'est nous-même.¹¹ Ici commence la conscience, et dans la conscience éclatent l'intelligence et la volonté.

Jusque-là, la nature est pour nous un spectacle que nous ne voyons que du dehors. Nous ne voyons des choses que l'extériorité de l'acte; nous ne voyons pas la disposition, non plus que la puissance. Dans la conscience, au contraire, c'est le même être qui agit et qui voit l'acte, ou plutôt l'acte et la vue de l'acte se confondent. L'auteur, le drame, l'acteur, le spectateur, ne font qu'un. C'est donc ici seulement qu'on peut espérer de surprendre le principe de l'acte.

C'est donc dans la conscience seule que nous pouvons trouver le type de l'habitude; c'est dans la conscience seule que nous pouvons espérer non plus seulement d'en constater la loi apparente, mais d'en apprendre le *comment* et le *pourquoi*, d'en pénétrer la génération, et d'en comprendre la cause.

II

I. La conscience implique la science, et la science l'intelligence. La condition générale de l'intelligence, comme de l'existence, est l'unité. Mais dans l'unité absolument indivisible de la simple intuition d'un objet simple, la science s'évanouit, et par conséquent la conscience. L'idée, objet de la science, est l'unité intelligible d'une diversité quelconque. La synthèse de la diversité dans l'unité de l'idée est le jugement. La faculté de juger est l'entendement.

La science est donc dans l'entendement; or, l'entendement a ses conditions auxquelles il assujettit la science.

La diversité est la matière et l'unité la forme de la quantité. Or, l'entendement ne saisit la quantité que sous la condition particulière et déterminante de la distinction des parties, c'est-à-dire sous la forme de l'unité de la pluralité, de la quantité discrète, du nombre. L'idée de la distinction des parties ne se détermine, à son tour, dans l'entendement, que sous la condition plus particulière encore de la distinction d'intervalles qui les séparent; en d'autres

movement, at the highest degree of perfection. The being, having originally arisen from the fatality of the mechanical world, manifests itself within that mechanical world in the most accomplished form of the freest activity. This being is ourselves.¹¹ Here consciousness begins, and in consciousness will and intelligence burst forth.

Up to this point, nature is a spectacle for us that we can only see from the outside. We see only the exteriority of the actuality of things; we do not see their dispositions or powers. In consciousness, by contrast, the same being at once acts and sees the act; or, better, the act and the apprehension of the act are fused together. The author, the drama, the actor, the spectator are all one. It is, therefore, only here that we can hope to discover the principle of actuality.

Hence it is in consciousness alone that we can find the archetype of habit; it is only in consciousness that we can aspire not just to establish its apparent law but to learn its *how* and its *why*, to illuminate its generation and, finally, to understand its cause.

II

I. Consciousness implies knowing and knowing implies intelligence. The general condition of intelligence, as of existence, is unity. But in the absolutely indivisible unity of the simple intuition of an object, knowing fades, and so consequently does consciousness. The idea, the object of knowing, is the intelligible unity of a certain diversity. The synthesis of diversity in the unity of the idea is judgement. The faculty of judgement is the understanding.

Knowing is therefore in the understanding; yet the understanding has its own conditions to which it subjects knowing.

Diversity is the matter, and unity the form, of quantity. But the understanding grasps quantity only under the particular and determining condition of distinguishing parts – that is, in the form of the unity of plurality, of discrete quantity, of number. The idea of distinct parts is, in turn, determined within the understanding only under the still more particular condition of distinguishing the intervals separating them; in other words, the understanding represents number only within the plurality of the limits of a continuous quantity. Yet continuity can be grasped by the understanding only on the basis of coexistence. Continuous, coexisting quantity is extension. Thus quantity is the logical, knowable form of extension; and the understanding

termes, l'entendement ne se représente le nombre que dans la pluralité des limites d'une quantité continue. Enfin la continuité ne se laisse saisir par l'entendement que sous la condition de la coexistence. La quantité continue coexistante est l'étendue. Ainsi la quantité est la forme logique, scientifique de l'étendue; et l'entendement ne se représente la quantité que sous la forme sensible de l'étendue, dans l'intuition de l'espace.¹²

Mais il n'y a rien, dans l'indéfini de l'espace, de défini, ni d'un. Ce n'est pas dans cette diffusion sans forme et sans bornes, que je trouve l'unité. C'est donc en moi que je la puise pour la transporter hors de moi et pour me l'opposer.

En outre, si je ne me représente la diversité que dans la pluralité des divisions que j'établis dans l'étendue, et où je réfléchis ma propre unité, il faut, pour m'en représenter la totalité, l'unité d'ensemble, que j'ajoute les unes aux autres les parties et que je les rassemble; l'addition est successive; elle implique le temps.

Mais dans le temps tout passe, rien ne demeure. Comment mesurer ce flux non interrompu et cette diffusion sans bornes aussi de la succession, sinon par quelque chose qui ne passe pas, mais qui subsiste et dure? Et qu'est-ce encore si ce n'est moi? Car tout ce qui est de l'espace est hors du temps. En moi se trouve la substance, dans le temps à la fois et hors du temps, mesure du changement comme de la permanence, type de l'identité.¹³

Maintenant si, pour la synthèse de la diversité dans l'étendue, il faut l'addition, et si l'addition n'est possible que dans le temps, pour réaliser l'addition elle-même à travers la continuité de l'étendue, ne faut-il pas le passage continu d'une extrémité à l'autre par toutes les divisions intermédiaires? Ce passage est le mouvement, le mouvement que j'accomplis immobile, du sein de mon identité.¹⁴

De plus, les parties de l'espace ont leur ordre; le mouvement a sa direction, réglée sur l'ordre des parties. Pour me représenter la synthèse de la diversité dans l'espace, non seulement il faut que je sois le sujet substantiel qui accomplisse le mouvement, au moins par l'imagination; il faut encore que j'en conçoive, que j'en marque la fin, et que j'en veuille la direction.

L'étendue est donc pour l'entendement la condition du développement de la quantité, et le mouvement la forme nécessaire de la synthèse de la quantité. Rien ne nous est distinctement intelligible que ce que nous pouvons nous figurer dans le champ de l'imagination; nous ne concevons rien en effet d'une manière distincte que nous ne nous décrivions en effet à nous-même, dans un espace imaginaire.¹⁵ Et dans toute conception distincte est enveloppée par cela même la conscience, plus ou moins obscure, de l'activité volontaire, et de la personnalité.

represents quantity to itself only in the sensible form of extension, in the intuition of space.¹²

But there is nothing determinate or unitary in the indeterminateness of space. It is not in this formless and limitless diffusion that I find unity. It is, in fact, in myself that I find it, only then to carry it outside of myself and to oppose myself to it.

Moreover, if diversity is represented only in the plurality of the divisions that I establish within extension, and through which I reflect my own unity, then it is necessary, in order to represent the totality or wholeness of that extension, that I combine the different parts, bringing them together. This addition is successive; it implies time.

But in time everything passes and nothing remains. How to measure this uninterrupted flux and also this limitless diffusion of succession, if not by something that does not change, but which subsists and remains? And what is this, if not me? For everything that belongs to space is outside time. Substance, at once inside and outside time, is found within me, as the measure of change and permanence alike, as the figure of identity.¹³

Now, if addition is necessary for the synthesis of diversity in extension, and if addition is possible only in time, does there not have to be, for addition itself to be realized through the continuity of extension, the continuous passage from one extremity to the other through all the intermediate divisions? This passage is movement, the movement that I accomplish whilst being immobile at the heart of my identity.¹⁴

Moreover, the parts of space have their own order, and the direction of movement is based on the order of these parts. In order to represent the synthesis of diversity in space, it is necessary not only that I be a substantial subject accomplishing movement, at least in the imagination, but also that I conceive it, that I mark its end, and that I will its direction.

Thus extension is, for the understanding, the condition for the development of quantity, and movement is the necessary form of the synthesis of quantity. Only what we can figuratively represent in the field of the imagination is clearly intelligible to us; only what we describe to ourselves in an imaginary space can be conceived distinctly.¹⁵ And, by this very fact, within every distinct conception there is enveloped an awareness, more or less obscure, of voluntary activity and personality.

But in these terms movement is still an indeterminate generality. Every real movement has its own quantity. This quantity is neither extension nor speed alone; it is the very degree of the reality of movement, of which speed and amplitude are only the result and the sign; it is intensity. Yet intensity,

Mais dans ces termes le mouvement est encore une généralité indéterminée. Tout mouvement réel a sa quantité. Ce n'est pas l'étendue, ni la vitesse toute seule; c'est le degré même de sa réalité, dont la vitesse et l'amplitude ne sont que le résultat et le signe: c'est l'intensité. Or, l'intensité, le degré de la réalité n'a sa mesure directe que dans l'énergie de la cause, dans la force. D'un autre côté, si la force est à elle-même sa mesure, elle se mesure aussi, elle mesure du moins et proportionne son énergie actuelle à la résistance qu'elle doit vaincre. Le mouvement est la résultante de l'excès de la puissance sur la résistance. Le rapport et la mesure de la puissance et de la résistance sont dans la conscience de l'effort.

Enfin, si le sujet qui s'oppose à l'objectivité de l'étendue ne se connaît que dans l'action par laquelle il imprime le mouvement, et si l'activité motrice a sa mesure dans l'effort, c'est dans la conscience de l'effort qui se manifeste nécessairement à elle-même, sous la forme éminente de l'activité volontaire, la personnalité.¹⁶

L'effort enveloppe deux éléments, l'action et la passion. La passion est la manière d'être qui a sa cause immédiate en quelque chose de différent de l'être auquel elle appartient. L'action est la manière d'être dont l'être à qui elle appartient est à soi-même la cause immédiate. La passion et l'action sont donc contraires l'une à l'autre; et l'assemblage de ces contraires contient toutes les formes possibles de l'existence. L'effort n'est donc pas seulement la condition première, mais aussi le type complet et l'abrégé de la conscience.

L'action est la condition immédiate de la distinction du sujet et de l'objet de la connaissance; c'est donc la condition de la connaissance distincte. La passion, contraire de l'action, est donc incompatible, par elle-même, avec la connaissance et la conscience distincte. Elle ne peut être que la matière d'une connaissance confuse, à peine distinguée et de l'objet et du sujet de la connaissance même. À l'action est étroitement liée la *perception* claire; la passion n'est dans la conscience que l'obscur *sensation*. Dans toute l'étendue de la conscience, la perception et la sensation sont donc en sens et en raison inverses, comme l'action et la passion qu'elles représentent; c'est une loi nécessaire.¹⁷

L'effort est en quelque sorte le lieu d'équilibre où l'action et la passion, et par conséquent la perception et la sensation, se balancent l'une l'autre. C'est la limite commune de ces contraires, le moyen terme où se touchent ces extrêmes.

L'effort s'accomplit dans le tact. Le tact s'étend de l'extrémité de la passion à celle de l'action. Il en comprend dans son développement tous les degrés intermédiaires; il en vérifie, à tous ces degrés, la loi de réciprocité.

the degree of reality, finds its direct measure in the energy of the cause: in force. From another perspective, if force is its own measure, it is also measured in that it measures itself out sparingly, making its present energy proportional to the resistance it has to overcome. Movement is the result of an excess of power in relation to resistance. The relation and the measure of both power and resistance are present in the consciousness of *effort*.

In the end, if the subject opposed to the objectivity of extension knows himself only in actions that initiate movement, and if motive activity has its measure in effort, it is in the consciousness of effort that personality, in its highest manifestation as voluntary activity, becomes manifest to itself.¹⁶

Effort comprises two elements: action and passion. Passion is the manner of being that has its immediate cause in something other than the being to which it belongs. Action is the manner of being whose immediate cause is the being to which that manner of being belongs. Action and passion are thus opposed to each other; and the coming together of these contraries contains all the possible forms of existence. Effort is therefore not only the primary condition, but also the archetype and essence, of consciousness.

Action is the immediate condition for distinguishing the subject and object of knowledge. Hence it is the condition of distinct knowledge. Passion, the opposite of action, is therefore incompatible, by itself, with knowledge and distinct consciousness. It can be known only confusedly, barely distinguished from either the object or the subject of knowledge itself. Clear *perception* is tightly bound to action; passion appears to consciousness merely as obscure *sensation*. In the whole expanse of consciousness, perception and sensation are proportionally and inversely related, like the action and passion that they represent; this is a necessary law.¹⁷

Effort is in a sense the site of equilibrium where action and passion, and consequently perception and sensation, come into relation. It is the common limit of these opposites, the middle ground where the extremes touch.

Effort is realized in the sense of touch. Touch extends from the extremity of passion to that of action. It comprehends in its development all the intermediary degrees between the two; it serves to confirm, at all these different degrees, the law of their reciprocity.

For as long as the organs of touch remain outside the sphere of voluntary movement, sensation alone reigns in them. It reigns, first of all, almost exclusively in the form of affection, pleasure or pain. The subject experiencing sensation barely distinguishes himself from it. It is wholly concentrated in him, as if within the obscure heart of his being. Such are the vague

Tant que les organes du tact sont hors de la sphère du mouvement volontaire, la sensation y règne seule. Elle y règne d'abord sous la forme presque exclusive de l'affection, du plaisir ou de la douleur. Le sujet qui l'éprouve s'en distingue à peine. Tout en est concentré en lui-même, et comme dans le fond obscur de son être. Telles sont les affections vagues qui se rapportent aux phénomènes internes de la vie végétale. Telles sont les sensations qui subsistent seules dans les organes mêmes de l'activité volontaire, quand la paralysie y a aboli le mouvement. Telles sont enfin, quoique déjà plus distinctes, les sensations de la chaleur et du froid. Ce sont des passions sur lesquelles l'intelligence n'a aucune prise, qui échappent à la mémoire, et que la volonté ne rappelle point.¹⁸

Au contraire, dès que les organes du tact obéissent sans résistance à la volonté, c'est la perception qui règne seule. La sensation, la passion, a disparu, et dans le champ de l'étendue que parcourt et mesure le mouvement, tout est objet d'intelligence et de science.

Mais, en même temps, et à mesure que la résistance s'évanouit, rien ne réfléchit plus sur lui-même le principe de l'action; rien ne le rappelle à lui.¹⁹ Sa volonté se perd dans l'excès de sa liberté. Dans la passion pure, le sujet qui l'éprouve est tout en lui, et par cela même ne se distingue pas et ne se connaît pas encore. Dans l'action pure, il est tout hors de lui, et ne se connaît plus. La personnalité périt également et dans la subjectivité et dans l'objectivité extrêmes: ici par l'action, et là par la passion. C'est dans la région moyenne du tact, c'est dans ce moyen terme mystérieux de l'effort que se trouve avec la réflexion la conscience la plus claire et la plus assurée de la personnalité.

Dans les quatre sens qui s'échelonnent entre les limites extrêmes du développement du tact, mêmes rapports, soumis à la même loi.²⁰

Le tact, dans sa passivité élémentaire, n'implique aucun mouvement. Les sens relatifs aux fonctions qui préparent la vie végétale, le goût et l'odorat, ne supposent aussi que des mouvements préparatoires pour mettre en contact l'objet avec l'organe. L'organe en lui-même est étranger au mouvement. *L'extériorité* n'entre donc pour rien dans les représentations de ces deux sens, ni par conséquent *l'objectivité*, qui suppose l'imagination du mouvement et de l'étendue, ni enfin la connaissance distincte et la perception. Le sujet sait à peine si la saveur, si l'odeur est en lui, si c'est lui-même, ou bien si c'est autre que lui. Les philosophes se le demandent encore.²¹ Comme la chaleur et le froid, peu s'en faut que ce soient des affections autant que des qualités. La conscience n'y démêle pas des parties, mais seulement des degrés d'intensité; ce sont presque des sensations pures.

affections related to the internal phenomena of vegetal life. Such are the sensations that remain in the organs of voluntary activity when paralysis has abolished movement. Such are, in the end – although already more distinct – the sensations of heat and cold. These are passions which intelligence cannot grasp, which go beyond memory, and which the will cannot recall.¹⁸

In contrast, as soon as the organs of touch obey the will without any resistance, it is perception alone that reigns. Sensation, passion has disappeared, and in the field of extension that is traversed and measured by movement, everything is now the object of knowing and intelligence.

But at the same time, and as resistance fades, there is no longer anything to reflect the principle of action back onto itself; nothing calls it back to itself.¹⁹ Its will is lost in the excess of its freedom. The subject experiencing pure passion is completely within himself, and by this very fact cannot yet distinguish and know himself. In pure action, he is completely outside of himself, and no longer knows himself. Personality perishes to the same degree in extreme subjectivity and in extreme objectivity, by passion in the one case and by action in the other. It is in the intermediate region of touch, within this mysterious middle ground of effort, that there is to be found, with reflection, the clearest and most assured consciousness of personality.

In the four senses that are spread out between the outer limits of the development of the sense of touch, the same relations are to be found, subject to the same law.²⁰

The sense of touch, in its elementary passivity, does not imply any movement. The senses relative to the functions that prepare vegetal life – those of taste and smell – also presuppose only preparatory movements to put the object in contact with the sense organ. The organ in itself is foreign to movement. Exteriority is in no way involved in the representations produced by these two senses; nor, consequently, is objectivity, which presupposes the imagination of movement and extension; nor, finally, is distinct knowledge and perception. The subject barely knows if the flavour or odour is in him, if it is himself, or if it is something other than him. Philosophers still wonder about this.²¹ Like heat and cold, these qualities are almost affections. Consciousness does not distinguish parts in them, but only degrees of intensity; they are almost pure sensations.

It is not the same for the more subtle senses of sight and hearing. Hearing is no longer, like the sense of taste and smell, the simple instrument of an immediate receptivity. It already implies a mechanism in the organ, a movement in the function; consequently, sound is no longer solely a sensation, and is rather an object of distinct perception. Unknowingly, the ear counts

Il n'en est pas de même des sens plus relevés de l'ouïe et de la vue. L'ouïe n'est plus, comme le goût et l'odorat, l'instrument simple d'une réceptivité immédiate. Elle implique déjà un mécanisme dans l'organe, un mouvement dans la fonction; dès lors le son n'est plus uniquement une sensation, mais un objet de perception distincte. L'oreille y compte, sans le savoir, des vibrations mesurables, figurables dans l'espace. Surtout, la voix est comme un organe accessoire qui réfléchit l'ouïe, et lui communique son mouvement et son activité.²² Le mouvement interne de l'organe propre de l'ouïe est moléculaire en quelque sorte, et à peine perceptible; le mouvement plus prononcé de l'organe vocal achève de changer le son, d'une sensation inexplicable, en un objet distinct d'imagination et de conception, en une idée qui a ses parties, qui peut être décomposée et recomposée, expliquée et enseignée.

Dans le sens de la vue, où le mécanisme est, sinon plus compliqué, du moins plus extérieur et plus apparent, non seulement aux mouvements internes des parties de l'organe s'ajoute encore le mouvement externe de l'ensemble; non seulement la vision distincte exige le concours des mouvements de deux organes distincts dans l'unité du regard, qui développe dans la conscience, avec le mouvement, l'unité du sujet et l'unité de l'objet qu'il s'oppose; mais de plus l'objet propre de la vue, la couleur, ne se manifeste que sous la forme même de l'étendue, et par conséquent dans le mouvement.

Or l'étendue visible est, à un haut degré, un objet de perception claire, de mesure précise, de science exacte; c'est la forme par excellence de l'imagination et la figure, le *schème* ordinaire des idées.

Ainsi d'un bout à l'autre de l'échelle des sens, comme dans le développement du tact, si la sensation, déclinant toujours, ne disparaît pas entièrement, du moins la perception prédomine toujours davantage; la perception, c'est-à-dire le mouvement, l'activité, la liberté, dans le monde de la diversité et de l'opposition. C'est la loi profonde qui se révèle au dehors, dans la série des différents sens, depuis la première jusqu'à la dernière forme du tact, par le progrès de la symétrie et de l'indépendance des organes, de leur séparation dans l'espace, et en même temps de leur harmonie dans le mouvement.

C'est donc le développement en sens inverse de la passion et de l'action qui remplit la sphère de la conscience; la conscience, la science même, est dans l'action et se développe avec elle; mais l'action dans le mouvement, en contraste avec la passion. Au pôle supérieur de l'absolue activité, comme au pôle inférieur de la passivité absolue, la conscience, ou du moins la conscience distincte, n'est plus possible. Toute distinction et toute science s'absorbent dans l'impersonnalité.

in the sound measurable vibrations that can be pictured in space. Above all, the voice is like an accessory organ that reflects hearing, communicating to it both its activity and its movement.²² The internal movement of the organ proper to hearing is molecular in a certain sense, and barely perceptible; the more pronounced movement of the vocal organ manages to change sound from an inexplicable sensation into a distinct object of imagination and conception, into an idea that has its parts, that can be taken apart and put back together again, explained and taught.

In the sense of sight, the mechanism is, if not more complicated, at least more external and apparent. Not only is the external movement of the whole organ of sight added to the internal movements of its parts; not only does clear vision require the concordance of the movements of two distinct organs in the unity of sight, which allows for the development in consciousness, with movement, of the unity of the subject and the unity of the object opposed to it – but, what is more, the object proper to vision, namely colour, is manifest only in the very form of extension, and consequently only in movement.

Yet visible extension is, to a high degree, an object of clear perception, of precise measure, of exact science; it is the highest form of imagination and figure, the ordinary *schema* of ideas.

Thus from the lowest to the highest points on the scale of the senses, as in the development of the sense of touch, if sensation, though always declining, still does not disappear entirely, then at least perception predominates more and more: perception, which is to say, movement, activity and freedom in the world of diversity and opposition. This is the profound law that is outwardly manifest in the series of the different senses, from the lowest to the highest form of the sense of touch, by the progressive symmetry and independence of the organs, by their separation in space, and, at the same time, by their harmony in movement.

Hence it is the development in opposite directions of action and passion that fills the sphere of consciousness. Consciousness, knowledge itself, resides in action and develops with it; but action in movement, that is, as contrasted with passion. At the higher pole of absolute activity, just as at the lower pole of absolute passivity, consciousness, or at least distinct consciousness, is no longer possible. Any distinction, and therefore any knowing, would here be absorbed in impersonality.

II. Since there is nothing in distinct consciousness without the general condition of movement, and since movement is in time, the condition, the being of consciousness is to be in time. Time is the first law and the necessary form

II. Puisqu'il n'y a rien dans la conscience distincte que sous la condition générale du mouvement, et que le mouvement est dans le temps, la condition, l'être de la conscience est d'être dans le temps. Le temps est la première loi et la forme nécessaire de la conscience. Tout ce qui est dans la conscience est donc un changement ayant sa durée en un sujet qui dure et ne change point. Quel est donc le résultat, dans la sphère de la conscience, de la durée même du changement?

On a vu que la passion et l'action (l'action dans le mouvement, du moins) sont partout, dans tout l'empire de la conscience, en sens et en raison inverse l'une de l'autre. La continuité ou la répétition de la passion l'affaiblit; la continuité ou la répétition de l'action l'exalte et la fortifie. La sensation prolongée ou répétée diminue par degrés et finit par s'éteindre. Le mouvement prolongé ou répété devient graduellement plus facile, plus rapide et plus assuré. La perception, qui est liée au mouvement, devient également plus claire, plus certaine, plus prompte.²³

Dans la conscience du mouvement même, il y a un élément de sensibilité: l'effort. L'effort diminue par la continuité et la répétition du mouvement.

Réciproquement, dans toute sensation, hormis peut-être dans les affections internes des fonctions vitales, la mobilité et la perception ont quelque part; c'est un élément que la continuité ou la répétition ne détruit pas, mais qu'elle développe au contraire et qu'elle perfectionne. En s'appliquant aux sensations les plus obscures du goût et de l'odorat, l'activité les détache en quelque sorte de leur sujet et les transforme peu à peu en objets de perception distincte; au sentiment elle ajoute ou elle substitue le jugement. Elle réduit de plus en plus, dans le chaud et le froid, dans l'odeur, la couleur ou le son, l'élément de l'affection et de la sensibilité pure; elle développe l'élément de la connaissance et du jugement. Ainsi, les sensations où l'on ne cherche que le plaisir s'émeussent bientôt. Le goût devient de plus en plus obtus chez celui qui se livre par passion à l'usage fréquent des liqueurs spiritueuses; chez celui qui cherche la science des saveurs, il devient de plus en plus délicat et subtil.

Avec la sensation, s'affaiblissent peu à peu le plaisir ou la peine qui y étaient attachés, et la peine surtout. A l'action est lié le plaisir; la durée ne diminue pas le plaisir de l'action; elle l'augmente.²⁴

Dans le mouvement même, avec l'effort, disparaît la fatigue et la peine. Et dans la sensation, sans doute, c'est l'activité encore qui intervient pour en entretenir ou pour en faire revivre les voluptés périssables. C'est elle qui, jusques en des sentiments pénibles, démêle peu à peu des émotions agréables qui s'y mêlaient, et, quand la peine s'efface, retient et développe le plaisir.

of consciousness. Everything in consciousness is thus a change that has its duration in a constant, unchanging subject. What, then, is the result, in the sphere of consciousness, of the very duration of change?

We have seen that action (action within movement, at least) and passion are always, in the realm of consciousness, proportionally and inversely related to each other. The continuity or the repetition of passion weakens it; the continuity or repetition of action exalts and strengthens it. Prolonged or repeated sensation diminishes gradually and eventually fades away. Prolonged or repeated movement becomes gradually easier, quicker and more assured. Perception, which is linked to movement, similarly becomes clearer, swifter, and more certain.²³

In the consciousness of movement itself there is an element of sensibility: effort. Effort diminishes according to the continuity and repetition of movement.

Reciprocally, in every sensation – perhaps with the exception of the internal affections of the vital functions – mobility and perception have a role. This is a role that continuity or repetition does not destroy, but which, on the contrary, it develops and perfects. In applying itself to the most obscure sensations in the senses of taste and smell, activity releases them in a certain manner from their subject and gradually transforms them into objects of distinct perception, adding judgement to the feeling, or entirely replacing it. Activity increasingly reduces, in the warm and the cold, in odour, colour or sound, the element of affection and pure sensation, and develops the element of knowledge and judgement. In this way, the sensations in which we seek only pleasure soon fade. Taste becomes more and more obtuse in the one who, by passion, is delivered over to the frequent use of strong liquors; in the connoisseur who discerns flavours, it becomes more and more delicate and subtle.

As the sensation gradually diminishes, so too do the pleasure and pain attached to it – particularly the pain. Action and pleasure are bound together; duration does not decrease the pleasure in the action, but rather augments it.²⁴

In movement itself, fatigue and struggle recede along with effort. And in sensation it is doubtless activity that intervenes to maintain or to resuscitate the transient sensual pleasures. It is activity that, even with painful sensations, gradually disentangles the agreeable emotions caught up in them, and, when the pain disappears, retains and develops the pleasure.

Thus everywhere, in every circumstance, continuity or repetition – that is, duration – weakens passivity and excites activity. But in this story of

Ainsi partout, en toute circonstance, la continuité ou la répétition, la durée, affaiblit la passivité, exalte l'activité. Mais dans cette histoire contraire des deux puissances contraires, il y a un trait commun, et ce trait explique tout le reste.

Toutes les fois que la sensation n'est pas une douleur, à mesure qu'elle se prolonge ou se répète, à mesure, par conséquent, qu'elle s'efface, elle devient de plus en plus un besoin. De plus en plus, si l'impression nécessaire pour la déterminer vient à ne plus se reproduire, le trouble et le malaise accusent dans la sensibilité le désir impuissant.²⁵

D'un autre côté, à mesure que dans le mouvement l'effort s'efface et que l'action devient plus libre et plus prompte, à mesure aussi elle devient davantage une tendance, un penchant qui n'attend plus le commandement de la volonté, qui le prévient, qui souvent même se dérobe entièrement et sans retour à la volonté et à la conscience.²⁶ Tels sont surtout ces mouvements, d'abord plus ou moins volontaires, qui dégénèrent peu à peu en mouvements convulsifs, et qu'on appelle des *tics*.

Ainsi, dans la sensibilité, dans l'activité se développe également par la continuité ou la répétition une sorte d'activité obscure qui prévient de plus en plus ici le vouloir, et là l'impression des objets extérieurs.²⁷ Dans l'activité, elle reproduit l'action même; dans la sensibilité, elle ne reproduit pas la sensation, la passion, qui veut une cause externe, mais elle l'appelle, elle l'invoque, elle l'implore en quelque sorte.

Or, la condition de la passion est la contrariété entre l'état actuel du sujet qui l'éprouve et l'état où tend à l'amener la cause qui la lui fait éprouver. Le semblable n'a pas d'action sur le semblable.²⁸ Ainsi l'attraction électrique suppose la contrariété des états électriques; l'affinité chimique, la contrariété des éléments; l'irritation, la contrariété de la substance irritante et de l'organe sur lequel elle fait impression; telle est l'irritation qui détermine les fonctions préparatrices ou complémentaires de l'assimilation.²⁹ La sensation enfin exige la contrariété entre l'état de l'objet du sens et l'état du sens même.

Si donc il se développe dans la sensibilité, à mesure qu'elle subit la même impression, une tendance à persister dans le même état où l'impression l'avait mise, ou bien à y revenir, l'opposition entre l'état du sujet et l'état où l'impression externe le fait arriver disparaît de plus en plus, et, de plus en plus, la sensation s'affaiblit. Par exemple, toute sensation uniforme longtemps répétée, émuissant la sensibilité, provoque le sommeil, et elle le provoque d'autant plus qu'elle est plus forte, et que la sensibilité est plus vive. Tel est l'effet ordinaire d'un balancement ou bercement continu, ou d'un bruit monotone, surtout dans l'enfance.³⁰ Or, si le mouvement ou le bruit vient à

two agonistic powers there is a common trait, and this trait explains all the rest.

Whenever a sensation is not painful, to the degree that it is prolonged or repeated – to the degree, consequently, that it fades away – it becomes more and more of a need. Increasingly, if the impression that is necessary to provoke the sensation no longer occurs, one's distress and unease reveal an impotence of desire in the realm of sensibility.²⁵

From another perspective, as effort fades away in movement and as action becomes freer and swifter, the action itself becomes more of a tendency, an inclination that no longer awaits the commandments of the will but rather anticipates them, and which even escapes entirely and irremediably both will and consciousness.²⁶ This is particularly evident in those movements, initially more or less voluntary, that gradually degenerate into convulsive ones, which we call *tics*.

In this way, then, continuity or repetition brings about a sort of obscure activity that increasingly anticipates both the impression of external objects in sensibility, and the will in activity.²⁷ In activity, this reproduces the action itself; in sensibility it does not reproduce the sensation, the passion – for this requires an external cause – but calls for it, invokes it; in a certain sense it implores the sensation.

The necessary condition of passion is the contrast between the present state of the subject experiencing it, and the state to which the cause of the passion tends to bring him. Like is unaffected by like.²⁸ Electrical attraction presupposes the opposition of electrical states; chemical affinity presupposes the opposition of elements; irritation presupposes the opposition of the irritating substance and the organ on which it makes an impression. Such is the irritation determining the preparatory or complementary functions of assimilation.²⁹ Sensation requires, then, contrariety between the state of the sensed object, and the state of the sense itself.

Hence if there develops within sensibility, as it receives the same impression, a tendency to persist in the same state to which the impression has brought it, or else to come back to this state, then the opposition between the state of the subject and the state to which the external impression has brought it increasingly disappears, and thus sensation continues to fade. For example, every uniform sensation that is repeated over a long period dulls sensibility, inducing sleep, all the more so when the sensation is strong and when sensibility is keen. Such is the ordinary effect of a continual swinging or rocking, or of a monotonous noise, particularly in childhood.³⁰ But if the movement or the noise ceases, sleep also comes to an end. Rest and silence

cesser, le sommeil cesse. Le repos, le silence réveillent. C'est donc que le bruit et le mouvement ne provoquent le sommeil qu'en développant dans les organes des sens une sorte d'activité obscure qui les monte au ton de la sensation, qui la détruit par cela même, mais qui en fait un besoin pour la sensibilité. Dès que la cause de la sensation vient à disparaître, le besoin se manifeste par l'inquiétude et le réveil. Ainsi c'est par le développement progressif d'une activité interne que s'explique l'affaiblissement progressif de la passivité.

D'un autre côté, le mouvement implique la passion; l'action dans la cause, la passion dans le sujet du mouvement, qui subit l'action de la cause. Si donc le mouvement, à mesure qu'il se répète, se change de plus en plus en un mouvement involontaire, ce n'est pas dans la volonté, c'est dans l'élément passif du mouvement lui-même que se développe peu à peu une activité secrète. Ce n'est pas l'action proprement dite que fait naître ou que fortifie la continuité ou la répétition de la locomotion; c'est une tendance toujours plus obscure et irréfléchie, qui descend de plus en plus avant dans l'organisme, et s'y concentre de plus en plus. L'habitude n'exerce qu'une influence indirecte sur les actes simples de la volonté et de l'intelligence, en abaissant devant elles les obstacles, et en leur assujettissant les moyens.

Ce n'est pas non plus l'activité véritable, que ce désir qui s'allume dans le sens, à mesure que la sensation s'éteint, et qui ne se révèle que par ses effets. C'est une tendance aveugle tenant de la passion autant que de l'action.

Ainsi, la continuité ou la répétition abaisse la sensibilité; elle exalte la motilité. Mais elle exalte l'une et abaisse l'autre de la même manière, par une seule et même cause: le développement d'une spontanéité irréfléchie, qui pénètre et s'établit de plus en plus dans la passivité de l'organisation, en dehors, au-dessous de la région de la volonté, de la personnalité et de la conscience.

L'affaiblissement graduel des sensations et la facilité croissante des mouvements s'expliqueraient peut-être, à force d'hypothèses, par quelque changement (que l'anatomie ne démontre pas) dans la constitution physique des organes.³¹ Mais aucune modification organique ne peut expliquer la *tendance*, le penchant dont le progrès coïncide avec la dégradation de la sensation et de l'effort. Peut-être encore réussirait-on jusqu'à un certain point à expliquer, comme on a cherché à le faire,³² par le progrès de l'attention, de la volonté, de l'intelligence, le progrès de l'aisance et de la sûreté des mouvements, et la disparition de la sensation. Mais si la sensation disparaît à la longue parce que l'attention s'en lasse et se détourne ailleurs, d'où vient que la sensibilité demande de plus en plus cette sensation que la volonté abandonne? Si le mouvement devient plus prompt et plus aisé, parce que l'intelligence en connaît mieux toutes les parties, et que la volonté

awaken. Noise and movement, therefore, only induce sleep by developing in the sensory organs a sort of obscure activity which brings them up to the tone of the sensation. This destroys sensation, but at the same time creates a need for it. As soon as the cause of the sensation disappears, this need manifests itself in worry and wakefulness. It is in this way, that is to say, by the progressive development of an internal activity, that the progressive weakening of passivity is to be explained.

From another perspective, movement implies passion: there is action in the cause, and passion in the subject of the movement, which suffers the action of the cause. Hence if movement, as it is repeated, becomes more and more involuntary, it is not in the will but in the passive element of the movement itself that a secret activity gradually develops. To be precise, it is not action that gives birth to or strengthens the continuity or repetition of locomotion; it is a more obscure and unreflective tendency, which goes further down into the organism, increasingly concentrating itself there. Habit exercises only an indirect influence on the simple acts of will and intelligence, in pulling down the obstacles before them, and in securing the means for them.

Similarly, the desire awakened in the sense as sensation fades, which is revealed only by its effects, is not a veritable activity. It is a blind tendency that derives from passion as much as from action.

In this way, continuity or repetition dulls sensibility, whereas it excites the power of movement. But it weakens the one and excites the other in the same way, by one and the same cause: the development of an unreflective spontaneity, which breaks into passivity and the organism, and increasingly establishes itself there, beyond, beneath the region of will, personality and consciousness.

The gradual weakening of the sensations and the increasing ease of the movements could perhaps be explained hypothetically by some change (which anatomy has not discovered) in the physical constitution of the organs.³¹ But no organic modification can explain the *tendency*, the inclination whose progress coincides with the degradation of sensation and effort. The attempts made to explain the increasing ease and certainty of the movements, and the disappearance of sensation, by the progress of attention, of will and of intelligence,³² might still be considered capable of a certain level of success. But if the sensation disappears in the long run because attention tires of it and turns elsewhere, how is it that sensibility increasingly demands this sensation that the will abandons? If movement becomes swifter and easier because intelligence knows better all its parts, and because the will

combine l'action avec plus d'assurance et de précision, d'où vient qu'avec le progrès de la facilité du mouvement coïncide la décroissance de la volonté et de la conscience?

Les théories physiques et les théories rationalistes sont ici également en défaut. La loi de l'habitude ne s'explique que par le développement d'une Spontanéité passive et active tout à la fois, et également différente de la Fatalité mécanique, et de la Liberté réflexive.

III. Cependant, tout en devenant une habitude, et en sortant de la sphère de la volonté et de la réflexion, le mouvement ne sort pas de l'intelligence. Il ne devient pas l'effet mécanique d'une impulsion extérieure, mais l'effet d'un penchant qui succède au vouloir. Ce penchant se forme par degrés, et aussi loin que la conscience le peut suivre, elle y reconnaît toujours une tendance à la fin que la volonté se proposait. Or, toute tendance à une fin implique l'intelligence.

Mais dans la réflexion et la volonté, la fin que se propose l'intelligence est un objet qu'elle s'oppose, comme le but plus ou moins éloigné du mouvement. Dans le progrès de l'habitude, à mesure qu'à la volonté succède le penchant, il approche toujours davantage de l'acte à la réalisation duquel il aspire, il en revêt de plus en plus la forme. La durée du mouvement change peu à peu la puissance, la virtualité en tendance, et peu à peu la tendance se change en l'action. L'intervalle que l'entendement se représentait entre le mouvement et son but diminue donc peu à peu; la distinction s'efface; la fin dont l'idée provoquait le penchant s'en rapproche, y touche et s'y confond. A la réflexion qui parcourt et qui mesure les distances des contraires, les milieux des oppositions, une intelligence immédiate succède par degrés, où rien ne sépare le sujet et l'objet de la pensée.

Dans la réflexion et la volonté, la fin du mouvement est une idée, un idéal à accomplir, quelque chose qui doit être, qui peut être, et qui n'est pas encore. C'est une possibilité à réaliser. Mais à mesure que la fin se confond avec le mouvement, et le mouvement avec la tendance, la possibilité, l'idéal s'y réalise. L'idée devient être, l'être même et tout l'être du mouvement et de la tendance qu'elle détermine. L'habitude est de plus en plus une *idée substantielle*. L'intelligence obscure qui succède par l'habitude à la réflexion, cette intelligence immédiate où l'objet et le sujet sont confondus, c'est une intuition *réelle*, où se confondent le réel et l'idéal, l'être et la pensée.

Enfin, c'est de plus en plus hors de la sphère de la personnalité comme aussi hors de l'influence de l'organe central de la volonté, c'est dans les organes immédiats des mouvements que se forment les penchants qui font

synthesizes the action with more precision and assurance, how is it that the increasing facility of movement coincides with the diminution of will and consciousness?

Both physical and rationalist theories are lacking on this point. The law of habit can be explained only by the development of a Spontaneity that is at once active and passive, equally opposed to mechanical Fatality and to reflective Freedom.

III. However, although movement, as it becomes a habit, leaves the sphere of will and reflection, it does not leave that of intelligence. It does not become the mechanical effect of an external impulse, but rather the effect of an inclination that follows from the will. This inclination is formed gradually, and consciousness, so far as it can trace it, always finds that it inclines towards the end that the will had originally proposed. But every inclination towards a goal implies intelligence.

But in reflection and the will, the end proposed by intelligence is an object opposed to itself, as the more or less distant goal of movement. In the progress of habit, inclination, as it takes over from the will, comes closer and closer to the actuality that it aims to realize; it increasingly adopts its form. The duration of movement gradually transforms the potentiality, the virtuality, into a tendency, and gradually the tendency is transformed into action. The interval that the understanding represents between the movement and its goal gradually diminishes; the distinction is effaced; the end whose idea gave rise to the inclination comes closer to it, touches it and becomes fused with it. An immediate intelligence, in which nothing separates the subject and object of thought, gradually replaces the reflection that traverses and measures distances between contraries, the middle ground between opposing terms.

In reflection and will, the end of movement is an idea, an ideal to be accomplished: something that should be, that can be and which is not yet. It is a possibility to be realized. But as the end becomes fused with the movement, and the movement with the tendency, possibility, the ideal, is realized in it. The *idea* becomes *being*, the very being of the movement and of the tendency that it determines. Habit becomes more and more a *substantial idea*. The obscure intelligence that through habit comes to replace reflection, this immediate intelligence where subject and object are confounded, is a *real* intuition, in which the real and the ideal, being and thought are fused together.

Ultimately, it is more and more outside the sphere of personality, beyond the influence of the central organ of the will – that is to say, within the immediate

l'habitude et que s'en réalisent les idées; et c'est de ces organes que ces penchants, ces idées deviennent de plus en plus la forme, la manière d'être, l'être même. La spontanéité du désir et de l'intuition se dissémine, en quelque sorte, en se développant, dans la multiplicité indéfinie de l'organisation.

Mais c'est par une suite de degrés imperceptibles que les penchants succèdent aux volontés. C'est aussi par une imperceptible dégradation que souvent ces penchants, nés de la coutume, se relâchent si elle vient à s'interrompre, et que les mouvements sortis du domaine de la volonté y rentrent avec le temps. Entre les deux états, la transition est insensible, la limite est partout et nulle part. La conscience se sent expirer avec la volonté, puis revivre avec elle, par une gradation et une dégradation continues; et la conscience est la première, l'immédiate, l'unique mesure de la continuité.

Non seulement, donc, les mouvements que l'habitude soustrait graduellement à la volonté ne sortent pas par cela même de la sphère de l'intelligence pour passer sous l'empire d'un mécanisme aveugle; mais ils ne sortent pas de la même activité intelligente où ils avaient pris naissance.³³ Une force étrangère ne vient pas les diriger: c'est toujours la même force qui en est le principe, mais qui s'y abandonne de plus en plus à l'attrait de sa propre pensée. C'est la même force qui, sans rien perdre, d'ailleurs, de son unité supérieure dans la personnalité, se multipliant sans se diviser, s'abaissant sans descendre, se résout elle-même, par plusieurs endroits, en ses tendances, ses actes, ses idées, se transforme dans le temps et se dissémine dans l'espace.

Ce n'est donc pas une nécessité externe et de contrainte que celle de l'habitude, mais une nécessité d'attrait et de désir.³⁴ C'est bien une loi, que cette *loi des membres*,³⁵ qui succède à la liberté de l'esprit. Mais cette loi est une *loi de grâce*. C'est la cause finale qui prédomine de plus en plus sur la cause efficiente et qui l'absorbe en soi. Et alors, en effet, la fin et le principe, le fait et la loi, se confondent dans la nécessité.

Or, maintenant, quelle est la différence entre les tendances engendrées par la continuité ou la répétition de l'acte, et ces tendances primitives qui constituent notre nature? Quelle est la différence entre l'habitude et l'instinct?

Comme l'habitude, l'instinct est une tendance à une fin, sans volonté et sans conscience distincte. Seulement l'instinct est plus irréfléchi, plus irrésistible, plus infaillible. L'habitude approche toujours davantage, sans y atteindre jamais peut-être, de la sûreté, de la nécessité, de la spontanéité parfaite de l'instinct. Entre l'habitude et l'instinct, entre l'habitude et la nature,

organs of movements – that the inclinations constituting the habit are formed, and the ideas are realized. Such inclinations, such ideas become more and more the form, the way of being, even the very being of these organs. The spontaneity of desire and intuition is dispersed, in some way, as it develops, within the indeterminate multiplicity of the organism.

But it is by a succession of imperceptible degrees that inclinations take over from acts of will. It is also by an imperceptible degradation that these inclinations, born from custom, often decline if custom comes to be interrupted, and that the movements removed from the will return to its sphere after some time. The transition between these two states cannot be sensed; its dividing line is everywhere and nowhere. Consciousness feels itself expire along with the will, and then come back to life with it, by a gradation and degradation which are continuous; and consciousness is the first, immediate and unique measure of continuity.

Not only, then, do the movements that habit gradually removes from the will not leave the sphere of intelligence to pass into the grip of a blind mechanism, but they also do not withdraw from the same intelligent activity from which they were born.³³ A foreign force does not come to direct these movements; it is still the same force that forms their principle, but that, within them, surrenders itself more and more to the attraction of its own thought. It is the same force that, without losing anything of its higher unity in personality, proliferates without being divided; that descends without going under; that dissolves itself, in different ways, into its inclinations, acts and ideas; that is transformed in time, and that is disseminated in space.

Hence habit is not an external necessity of constraint, but a necessity of attraction and desire.³⁴ It is, indeed, a law, a *law of the limbs*,³⁵ which follows on from the freedom of spirit. But this law is a *law of grace*. It is the final cause that increasingly predominates over efficient causality and which absorbs the latter into itself. And at that point, indeed, the end and the principle, the fact and the law, are fused together within necessity.

Yet what is the difference between the tendencies engendered by the continuity or repetition of action, and the primitive tendencies that constitute our nature? What is the difference between habit and instinct?

Like habit, instinct is the tendency towards an end without will and distinct consciousness. Only, instinct is more unreflective, more irresistible, more infallible. Habit draws increasingly near to, perhaps without ever attaining, the reliability, necessity and perfect spontaneity of instinct. Between habit and instinct, between habit and nature, the difference is

la différence n'est donc que de degré, et cette différence peut être réduite et amoindrie jusqu'à l'infini.

Comme l'effort entre l'action et la passion, l'habitude est la commune limite, ou le terme moyen entre la volonté et la nature; et c'est un *moyen terme* mobile, une limite qui se déplace sans cesse, et qui avance par un progrès insensible d'une extrémité à l'autre.

L'Habitude est donc pour ainsi dire la *différentielle* infinitésimale, ou, encore, la *fluxion* dynamique de la Volonté à la Nature. La Nature est la *limite* du mouvement de décroissance de l'habitude.

Par conséquent, l'habitude peut être considérée comme une méthode, comme la seule méthode réelle, par une *suite convergente* infinie, pour l'approximation du rapport, réel en soi, mais incommensurable dans l'entendement, de la Nature et de la Volonté.

En descendant par degrés des plus claires régions de la conscience, l'habitude en porte avec elle la lumière dans les profondeurs et dans la sombre nuit de la nature. C'est une nature acquise,³⁶ une *seconde nature*³⁷ qui a sa raison dernière dans la nature primitive, mais qui seule l'explique à l'entendement. C'est enfin une nature *naturée*, œuvre et révélation successive de la nature *naturante*.

L'habitude transforme en mouvements instinctifs les mouvements volontaires. Or, dans le mouvement le plus volontaire, la volonté ne se propose et l'entendement ne se représente que la forme extérieure et l'extrémité du mouvement. Cependant entre le mouvement dans l'espace et l'exertion de la puissance motrice, il y a un milieu rempli par des moyens qui résistent d'abord, et c'est de cette résistance seule que nous avons dans l'effort la conscience obscure. Comment la puissance motrice s'applique-t-elle à ce moyen qui résiste? C'est ce dont nous n'avons plus aucune conscience. A mesure que nous reculons de la fin à l'origine, les ténèbres s'épaississent.³⁸ Or, par l'exercice répété ou prolongé, nous apprenons à proportionner la quantité de l'effort et à en choisir le point d'application conformément à la fin que nous voulons atteindre; et en même temps s'efface la conscience de l'effort.

Ainsi les organes s'habituent tellement aux mouvements qu'exigent un exercice violent ou un travail pénible, qu'ils en deviennent pour longtemps incapables de mouvements plus doux. Un homme accoutumé à exécuter des mouvements forts avec les muscles des mains et des doigts écrit moins ferme qu'un autre.³⁹ Le principe du mouvement s'est fait, sans le savoir, un *type*, une *idée d'action*,⁴⁰ dont il ne peut se défaire, et il dépasse involontairement, convulsivement même, toute fin placée en deçà de sa fin accoutumée.

merely one of degree, and this difference can always be lessened and reduced.

Like effort between action and passion, habit is the dividing line, or the middle term, between will and nature; but it is a moving middle term, a dividing line that is always moving, and which advances by an imperceptible progress from one extremity to the other.

Habit is thus, so to speak, the infinitesimal *differential*, or, the dynamic *fluxion* from Will to Nature. Nature is the *limit* of the regressive movement proper to habit.

Consequently, habit can be considered as a method – as the only real method – for the estimation, by a *convergent infinite* series, of the relation, real in itself but incommensurable in the understanding, of Nature and Will.

In descending gradually from the clearest regions of consciousness, habit carries with it light from those regions into the depths and dark night of nature. Habit is an acquired nature,³⁶ a *second nature*³⁷ that has its ultimate ground in primitive nature, but which alone explains the latter to the understanding. It is, finally, a *natured* nature, the product and successive revelation of *naturing* nature.

Habit transforms voluntary movements into instinctive movements. In the most voluntary movement, the will proposes and the understanding represents to itself only the external form and the extremity of the movement. However, between the movement in space and the exertion of the motive power there is a gap filled by initially resistant means, and in effort we have a vague consciousness only of this resistance. How does the motive power apply itself to resistance? Of this we no longer have any consciousness. As we step back to the origin from the end, the obscurity increases.³⁸ Yet by its repeated or prolonged exercise, we learn to adjust the quantity of effort, and to choose its point of application, in relation to the end that we wish to attain; at the same time, the consciousness of effort is effaced.

In this way the organs become so accustomed to movements requiring force or serious effort that they become incapable of more subtle movements for a long time afterwards. A man accustomed to carrying out strong movements with the muscles of his hands and fingers writes less firmly than another.⁴⁰ The principle of movement has thus made itself, without knowing it, a *figure*, an *idea in action*,³⁹ from which it cannot be unbound, and it involuntarily, even convulsively, surpasses any end placed before its accustomed end.

We had a kind of confused and inexplicable understanding of the original application of motive power to the organ of movement, and a sort of ineffable

Nous avons donc aussi de l'application originelle de la puissance motrice à l'organe du mouvement, quelque intelligence confuse et inexplicable et quelque ineffable intention, que l'habitude a pu encore atteindre. C'est le même point où l'habitude amène la conscience obscure de l'effort, puis la conscience claire de la direction extérieure du mouvement dans l'espace. Les degrés de la conscience se replient de la sorte l'un sur l'autre, du plus élevé au plus humble, et alors le mouvement entier se fait comme de soi-même; il devient tout entier naturel, instinctif, comme l'est toujours la première application de la puissance motrice à l'organe du mouvement.

En outre, si l'effort implique la résistance, la résistance à son tour ne se manifeste que dans l'effort. Comment sortir de ce cercle, et où trouver le commencement?

La volonté, en général, suppose l'idée de l'objet; mais l'idée de l'objet suppose également celle du sujet.

L'effort veut donc nécessairement une tendance antécédente sans effort, qui dans son développement rencontre la résistance; et c'est alors que la volonté se trouve, dans la réflexion de l'activité sur elle-même, et qu'elle s'éveille dans l'effort.⁴¹ La volonté, en général, suppose un penchant antérieur, involontaire, où le sujet qu'il entraîne ne se distingue pas encore de son objet.

Le mouvement volontaire n'a donc pas seulement sa matière, sa substance, mais son origine et sa source dans le désir.⁴² Le désir est un instinct primordial, dans lequel le but de l'acte est confondu avec l'acte, l'idée avec la réalisation, la pensée avec l'élan de la spontanéité; c'est l'état de nature, c'est la *nature* même.

La dégradation successive de la conscience et de la volonté dans la partie volontaire du mouvement représente donc la série simultanée des états de la volonté et de la conscience dans les parties du mouvement total, depuis la région de la volonté jusqu'à celle de la seule nature. Le dernier degré de l'habitude répond à la nature même. La nature n'est donc, comme ce dernier degré, que l'immédiation de la fin et du principe, de la réalité et de l'idéalité du mouvement, ou du changement en général, dans la spontanéité du désir.

Plus nous revenons de l'acte final du mouvement à son commencement, plus aussi de l'unité de la direction nous descendons dans une multiplicité indistincte d'où se soulève de toutes parts l'énergie motrice.⁴³ C'est le terme où tend le progrès de l'habitude: la dispersion du mouvement dans la multiplicité des tendances et dans la diversité des organes. Dans la nature aussi, dans la nature primitive comme dans cette seconde nature de l'habitude, se laisse donc entrevoir, au-dessous de l'unité centrale de la personnalité, la

intention that habit was still able to influence. Habit brings both this obscure consciousness of effort and the clear consciousness of the external direction of movement in space to the same point. The different degrees of consciousness, from the highest to the most humble, dissolve into each other, and in this way the movement as a whole occurs as if by itself; it becomes completely natural, instinctive, as the first application of the motive power to the organ of movement always is.

However, if effort implies resistance, resistance in turn only manifests itself in effort. How are we to get out of this circle, and where are we to find its beginning?

Will, in general, presupposes the idea of the object; but the idea of the object equally presupposes that of the subject.

Therefore effort necessarily requires an effortless antecedent tendency, which in its development encounters resistance; and it is at this point that the will finds itself in the self-reflection of activity, and is awakened through effort.⁴¹ The will, in general, presupposes a prior inclination – one that is involuntary – in which the subject that develops from it is not yet distinguished from its object.

Hence voluntary movement finds not only its matter, its substance, but also its source and origin in desire.⁴² Desire is a primordial instinct, in which the goal of the act is fused with the act itself, the idea with the realization, the thought with the spirit of spontaneity; this is the state of nature – it is *nature* itself.

The gradual, or successive, fading of consciousness and will in the voluntary part of the movement corresponds, therefore, to the simultaneous series of the states of will and consciousness within the parts of the whole movement, from the region of will to that of nature. The final degree of habit meets nature itself. Hence nature is, as this final degree, merely the immediation of the end and the principle, of the reality and ideality of movement, or of change in general, in the spontaneity of desire.

The more we step back from the final actuality of movement to its beginning, the more we descend from a unity of direction into an indistinct multiplicity in which motive energy rises up from all quarters.⁴³ This is the end point towards which the progress of habit leads: the dispersion of movement in the multiplicity of tendencies and in the diversity of the organs. In nature also – in primitive nature just as in this second nature that is habit – it is thus possible to perceive, beneath the central unity of personality, the mysterious dispersion of force and of intelligence, which is disseminated and absorbed in the substantiality of its own ideas.

dispersion mystérieuse de la force et de l'intelligence, répandue, absorbée dans la substantialité de ses propres idées.

L'activité motrice comprend donc, comme en une progression continue, toutes les puissances qui s'étendent de la volonté à l'instinct. Mais les puissances inférieures n'y sont contenues que sous une forme réduite et abrégée. Elles se développent en une série variée de fonctions et d'organes depuis ce faite élevé de la vie, éclairé de la lumière de la pensée, jusqu'aux plus basses et aux plus sombres régions. Des fonctions locomotives aux fonctions préparatoires de la nutrition, de celles-ci à la nutrition même et à la végétation, on voit succéder aux mouvements distincts, figurables et mesurables dans l'étendue, des mouvements presque insensibles, puis des mouvements moléculaires, enfin des transformations chimiques et les opérations vitales les plus secrètes. La mécanique le cède de plus en plus au dynamisme irreprésentable et inexplicable de la vie. Le champ de l'imagination se ferme, le flambeau de l'entendement s'éteint, la volonté s'éclipse, et la conscience s'évanouit. En même temps, avec la symétrie et l'opposition des organes la centralisation de l'organisme diminue. A l'empire de l'unité cérébrale succède de plus en plus la diffusion de la vie dans une multitude de centres indépendants.⁴⁴ L'influence de l'habitude est puissante encore, avec celle de la volonté, sur les fonctions mixtes, supérieures à la vie végétale: elle se manifeste hautement, comme on l'a vu plus haut, dans le changement qu'elle apporte aux périodes qui en sont le caractère éminent. Elle s'étend aussi à la vie végétale; elle y modifie profondément les instincts; elle altère et façonne en grande partie le tempérament. Les muscles et les articulations qu'on exerce deviennent plus forts et plus volumineux en même temps que plus agiles: la nutrition y est plus puissante. On s'habitue à la longue aux poisons les plus violents. Dans les affections chroniques, les médicaments perdent leur force, et il en faut changer de temps en temps.⁴⁵ Les mouvements ou les situations, d'abord les plus contraires et les plus fatigants, deviennent à la longue les plus commodes, et finissent par se changer en conditions indispensables des fonctions auxquelles on les a toujours associées; de même les aliments, l'air le plus malsain et le plus funeste deviennent, par l'habitude, les conditions mêmes de la santé.⁴⁶ La considération de l'habitude est un des éléments les plus importants de l'hygiène, du diagnostic et de la thérapeutique.⁴⁷ L'habitude ne devient nulle, ou du moins elle ne paraît le devenir que dans les fonctions les plus élémentaires de l'organisation. Mais jusqu'en ces abîmes qui semblent lui être interdits, les derniers et pâlissons rayons de la lumière qu'elle tire de la conscience éclairent, au plus profond de la nature, le mystère de l'identification de l'idéal et du réel, de la chose et de la

Motive activity includes, then, in a sort of continuous progression, all the different powers that stretch from will to instinct. But the lower powers are contained in it only in a reduced and curtailed form. They develop into a varied series of functions and organs, from the lofty peak of life, illuminated by the light of thought, to the lowest and darkest regions. From locomotive functions to the basic functions necessary for nutrition, from the latter to nutrition itself and to vegetation, movements that can be represented and measured in extension are replaced by almost imperceptible movements, then by molecular movements, and, finally, by chemical transformations and the most secret vital operations. Mechanics yields more and more to the inexplicable and unrepresentable dynamism of life. The imaginary field closes up, the flame of the understanding is extinguished, the will is eclipsed, and consciousness fades. At the same time, the centralization of the organism diminishes with the symmetry and the opposition of the organs. The diffusion of life in a plethora of independent centres takes over from the rule of cerebral unity.⁴⁴ The influence of habit, along with that of the will, is still powerful in relation to the mixed functions, those superior to vegetal life: as we have seen above, this manifests itself particularly in the way in which it affects the periods that are its most distinguished characteristic. Habit extends also to vegetal life: it profoundly changes the instincts within it; it alters, and to a large extent forms, temperament. The muscles and articulations that are exercised become stronger and larger and at the same time more agile: nutrition is more powerful in them. One becomes accustomed over time to the most violent poisons. In relation to chronic illnesses, medicines lose their power, and they have to be changed from time to time.⁴⁵ Movements or situations that initially are most difficult and tiring become over time the most convenient, and end up by making themselves into indispensable conditions of the functions with which they have always been associated; in the same way, the most unhealthy air and food become the very conditions of health.⁴⁶ Reflection on habit is one of the most important aspects of hygiene, of diagnostics and of therapeutics.⁴⁷ Habit is nullified, or at least seems to be nullified, only in the most elementary functions of the organism. But even in the abysses that seem forbidden to it, the last and fading rays of light that habit draws from consciousness illuminate, in the deepest heart of nature, the mystery of the identification of the ideal and the real, of the thing and thought, and of all the contraries that the understanding separates, which are fused in an inexplicable actuality of intelligence and desire.

The same principle and the same analogies reveal the secret of the abnormal and parasitic life that develops within regular life, which has its periods,

pensée, et de tous les contraires que sépare l'entendement, confondus dans un acte inexplicable d'intelligence et de désir.

Par le même principe et par la même analogie semble se découvrir le secret de cette vie anormale et parasite qui se développe dans la vie régulière, qui a ses périodes, son cours, sa naissance et sa mort; est-ce une idée ou un être, ou ne serait-ce pas plutôt une idée et un être à la fois, une idée concrète et substantielle hors de toute conscience, qui fait la maladie?⁴⁸ Ne serait-ce pas là aussi le secret divin de la transmission de la vie, comme d'une idée créatrice, qui se détache et s'isole dans le transport de l'amour pour vivre de sa vie propre, et se faire à elle-même son corps, son monde et sa destinée?⁴⁹ Ne serait-ce pas, de la même manière, le secret de la transmission de la maladie elle-même, de l'idée substantielle de la maladie, qui attend son temps et son heure pour être dans le fils ce qu'elle était dans le père, et qui se propage avec ses formes et ses périodes immuables de génération en génération?⁵⁰

Enfin, non seulement la forme la plus relevée de la vie dans l'humanité, l'activité motrice, renferme en abrégé toutes les formes inférieures qui se développent dans les fonctions subordonnées; mais la série de ces fonctions n'est elle-même que le résumé du développement général de la vie dans le monde, de règne en règne, de genre en genre, d'espèce en espèce, jusqu'aux plus imparfaits rudiments et aux éléments les plus simples de l'existence. Le monde, la nature entière offre l'aspect d'une progression continue où chaque terme est la condition et la matière de tous les termes supérieurs, la forme de tous les inférieurs, et où chacun se développe, par conséquent, et se représente par parties et en détail dans toute la série qu'il enveloppe.

Ainsi, dans son progrès au sein de la vie intérieure de la conscience, l'habitude figure sous une forme successive l'universalité des termes qui marquent dans le monde extérieur, sous la forme objective et immobile de l'espace, le développement progressif des puissances de la nature. Or, dans l'espace, la distinction des formes implique la limitation; il n'y a que des différences déterminées, finies; rien, donc, ne peut démontrer entre les limites une absolue continuité, et, par conséquent, d'une extrémité à l'autre de la progression, l'unité d'un même principe. La continuité de la nature n'est qu'une possibilité, une idéalité indémontrable par la nature même.⁵¹ Mais cette idéalité a son type dans la réalité du progrès de l'habitude; elle en tire sa preuve, par la plus puissante des analogies.

Dans l'homme, le progrès de l'habitude conduit la conscience, par une dégradation non interrompue, de la volonté à l'instinct, et de l'unité accomplie de la personne à l'extrême diffusion de l'impersonnalité. C'est donc une

its course, its own birth and death; is it an idea or a being which constitutes illness, or is it not rather at one and the same time an idea and a being, a concrete and substantial idea beyond consciousness?⁴⁸ Would this not also be the divine secret of the transmission of life, as of a creative idea, which detaches and isolates itself in the transport of love for life that is its own life, creating for itself its own body, its own world and destiny?⁴⁹ In the same way, would this not be the secret of the transmission of illness itself, of the substantial idea of illness, which bides its time in order to become in the son what it was in the father, and which is propagated with its forms and its immutable periods from generation to generation?⁵⁰

In the end, not only does the most elevated form of life in humanity – motive activity – contain in an abbreviated form all the inferior forms that develop in the subordinate functions; but also the series of these functions is itself only the summary of the general development of life in the world, from kingdom to kingdom, from genus to genus, from species to species, right down to the most imperfect rudiments and the simplest elements of existence. The world, nature as a whole, presents itself as a continuous progression in which each term is the condition and the matter of all the higher terms, the form of all the inferior terms, and in which, consequently, each develops and is represented, in its parts and in detail, in the whole of the series that envelops it.

In this way, in its progress to the heart of the interior life of consciousness, habit presents in a successive form the universality of the terms that mark in the exterior world, in the objective and immobile form of space, the progressive development of the powers of nature. But, in space, the distinction of forms implies limitation; there is no difference that is not determinate and finite. Nothing, therefore, can show that there is an absolute continuity between the limits, and, consequently, that from one extremity of the progression to the other there is the unity of one and the same principle. The continuity of nature is only a possibility, an ideality that cannot be demonstrated in nature itself.⁵¹ But this ideality is presented in the reality of the progression of habit; it draws its proof from it, by the most powerful of analogies.

In man, the progression of habit leads consciousness, by an uninterrupted degradation, from will to instinct, and from the accomplished unity of the person to the extreme diffusion of impersonality. There is, therefore, a single force, a single intelligence that is, in the life of man, the principle of all its functions and forms.

The conditions of reflection and memory, however, disappear along with those of space and movement. The most involuntary functions of our

seule force, une seule intelligence qui est dans la vie de l'homme le principe de toutes les fonctions et de toutes les formes de la vie.

Seulement, avec les conditions de l'espace et du mouvement disparaissent celles de la réflexion et de la mémoire. Les fonctions les plus involontaires de notre vie, celles de la nutrition, par exemple, ne sont pas des habitudes anciennes,⁵² transformées en instincts. Non seulement nous ne voyons pas qu'elles aient jamais dépendu de notre volonté, mais jamais elles n'en ont pu dépendre; elles se composent de mouvements insensibles et d'altérations organiques qui sont hors de la sphère de l'imagination et de l'entendement. Mais l'habitude amène au même point les mouvements volontaires, et les transforme en des instincts. La dégradation de la volonté et de la conscience, dans la série graduée des fonctions vitales, ne doit donc être aussi que le signe de la disparition graduelle des conditions de l'entendement et de la volonté réflexive, dans l'identité d'une même âme.⁵³

Il en est de même dans la série des règnes, des genres, des espèces.

La forme la plus élémentaire de l'existence, avec l'organisation la plus parfaite, c'est comme le dernier moment de l'habitude, réalisé et substantifié dans l'espace sous une figure sensible. L'analogie de l'habitude en pénètre le secret et nous en livre le sens.⁵⁴ Jusque dans la vie confuse et multiple du zoophyte, jusque dans la plante, jusque dans le cristal même,⁵⁵ on peut donc suivre, à cette lumière, les derniers rayons de la pensée et de l'activité, se dispersant et se dissolvant sans s'éteindre, mais loin de toute réflexion possible, dans les vagues désirs des plus obscurs instincts.

Toute la suite des êtres n'est donc que la progression continue des puissances successives d'un seul et même principe, qui s'enveloppent les unes les autres dans la hiérarchie des formes de la vie, qui se développent en sens inverse dans le progrès de l'habitude. La limite inférieure est la nécessité, le Destin, si l'on veut, mais dans la spontanéité de la Nature; la limite supérieure, la Liberté de l'entendement. L'habitude descend de l'une à l'autre; elle rapproche ces contraires, et, en les rapprochant, elle en dévoile l'essence intime et la nécessaire connexion.

IV. L'action et la passion ne sont pas renfermées entre l'effort et le dernier degré de la spontanéité vitale. Elles s'étendent au-delà et plus haut dans la volonté et l'intelligence. L'influence de l'habitude s'étend donc aussi à ces régions plus élevées et plus pures de l'esprit et du cœur. Mais nous avons déterminé la loi de l'habitude, et nous en avons assigné le principe dans le type originel et les conditions premières de la conscience. Il nous suffira de vérifier la généralité de cette loi et de ce principe.

life – those of nutrition, for example – are not old habits transformed into instincts.⁵² Not only do they seem never to have depended on our will, but they have never been able to depend on it; they are composed of imperceptible movements and organic alterations that stand outside the sphere of imagination and understanding. But habit leads voluntary movements to the same state, transforming them into instincts. The fading of the will and consciousness in the stratified series of vital functions can only be the sign, therefore, of the gradual disappearance, in the identity of one and the same mind, of the conditions of the understanding and reflective will.⁵³

It is the same in the series of kingdoms, of genera, of species.

The most elementary mode of existence, with the most perfect organization, is like the final moment of habit, realized and substantiated in space in a physical form. The analogy of habit penetrates its secret and delivers its sense over to us.⁵⁴ All the way down to the confused and multiple life of the zoophyte, down to plants, even down to crystals,⁵⁵ it is thus possible to trace, in this light, the last rays of thought and activity as they are dispersed and dissolved without yet being extinguished, far from any possible reflection, in the vague desires of the most obscure instincts.

The whole series of beings is therefore only the continuous progression of the successive powers of one and the same principle, powers enveloping one another in the hierarchy of the forms of life, powers which develop in the opposite direction within the progression of habit. The lower limit is necessity – Destiny, as might be said, but in the spontaneity of Nature; the higher limit is the Freedom of the understanding. Habit descends from the one to the other; it brings these contraries together, and in doing so reveals their intimate essence and their necessary connection.

IV. Action and passion are not closed in between effort and the final degree of vital spontaneity. They go beyond and higher than this in both will and intelligence. The influence of habit also extends to these higher and purer regions of the mind and the heart. But we have determined the law of habit, and we have assigned its principle within the original form and the primary conditions of consciousness. It will be sufficient for us here to verify the generality of this law and principle.

As soon as the soul arrives at self-consciousness, it is no longer merely the form, the end or even the principle of organization; a world opens within it that increasingly separates and detaches itself from the life of the body, and in which the soul has its own life, its own destiny and its own end to accomplish. It is to this superior life that the incessant progress of life and nature

Dès que l'âme est arrivée à la conscience de soi, elle n'est plus seulement la forme, la fin, ou même le principe de l'organisation; en elle-même, il s'ouvre un monde qui se dégage et se détache de plus en plus de la vie du corps, et où elle a sa vie à elle, sa destinée propre et sa fin à accomplir. C'est à cette vie supérieure que semble aspirer sans y pouvoir atteindre le progrès incessant de la vie et de la nature, comme à sa perfection, à son bien.⁵⁶ Cette vie, au contraire, a son bien en soi; et elle le connaît, elle le cherche, elle l'embrasse, à la fois comme son bien, et comme le bien même et la perfection absolue. Mais le plaisir et la douleur ont leurs raisons dans le bien et dans le mal; ils en sont les signes sensibles. Ici donc, dans ce monde de l'âme, se rencontre avec le plus vrai bien la forme la plus vraie de la sensibilité; c'est la passion de l'âme, le *sentiment*. Au sentiment s'oppose l'activité spirituelle et morale qui poursuit le bien ou le mal, tandis que le sentiment en recueille l'impression.

La continuité ou la répétition doit donc affaiblir par degrés le sentiment, comme elle affaiblit la sensation; elle y éteint par degrés, comme dans la sensation, le plaisir et la douleur. Elle change pareillement en un besoin le sentiment même qu'elle détruit; elle en rend de plus en plus la privation insupportable à l'âme. En même temps, la répétition ou la continuité rend l'activité morale plus facile et plus assurée. Elle développe dans l'âme non seulement la disposition, mais le penchant et la tendance actuelle à l'action, comme dans les organes la tendance au mouvement. Enfin, au plaisir fugitif de la sensibilité passive, elle fait par degrés succéder le plaisir de l'action.

Ainsi se développent de plus en plus, dans le cœur de celui qui fait le bien, et à mesure que l'habitude y détruit les émotions passives de la pitié, l'activité secourable et les joies intérieures de la charité.⁵⁷ Ainsi, l'amour s'augmente par les témoignages mêmes qu'il donne de soi;⁵⁸ ainsi il ranime de sa flamme pénétrante les impressions qui s'éteignent, et rouvre à chaque instant les sources épuisées de la passion.

Enfin, dans l'activité de l'âme, comme dans le mouvement, l'habitude transforme peu à peu en un penchant involontaire la volonté de l'action. Les *mœurs*, la *moralité*, se forment de cette sorte. La vertu est d'abord un effort, une fatigue; elle devient par la pratique seule un attrait et un plaisir, un désir qui s'oublie ou qui s'ignore, et peu à peu elle se rapproche de la sainteté de l'innocence. Là est tout le secret de l'éducation. Son art, c'est d'attirer au bien par l'action, et d'y fixer le penchant.⁵⁹ Ainsi se forme une *seconde nature*.

Dans le sein de l'âme elle-même, ainsi qu'en ce monde inférieur qu'elle anime et qui n'est pas elle, se découvre donc encore, comme la limite où le progrès de l'habitude fait redescendre l'action, la spontanéité irréfléchie du

seems – without being able to attain it – to aspire, as if to its perfection, to its good.⁵⁶ This higher life, in contrast, has its own good within itself; and it knows this, looks for it, embraces it, at once as its own good and as good itself, as absolute perfection. But pleasure and pain have their grounds in good and evil; they are the sensible signs of good and evil. Here, therefore, in this world of the soul, the truest good is accompanied by the truest form of sensibility; such are the passions of the soul – that is, *feeling*. Feeling is distinct from the spiritual and moral activity that pursues good and evil, though it gathers their impressions.

Continuity or repetition must therefore gradually weaken feeling, just as it weakens sensation; it gradually extinguishes pleasure and pain in feeling, as it does in sensation. Similarly, it changes into a need the very feeling that it destroys, making its absence more and more unbearable for the soul. At the same time, repetition or continuity makes moral activity easier and more assured. It develops within the soul not only the disposition, but also the inclination and the tendency to act, just as in the organs it develops the inclination for movement. In the end, it gradually brings the pleasure of action to replace the more transient pleasure of passive sensibility.

In this way, as habit destroys the passive emotions of pity, the helpful activity and the inner joys of charity develop more and more in the heart of the one who does good.⁵⁷ In this way, love is augmented by its own expressions;⁵⁸ in this way, it reanimates with its penetrating flame the impressions that have been extinguished, and at each instant reignites the exhausted sources of passion.

Ultimately, in the activity of the soul, as in that of movement, habit gradually transforms the will proper to action into an involuntary inclination. *Mores* and *morality* are formed in this manner. Virtue is first of all an effort and wearisome; it becomes something attractive and a pleasure only through practice, as a desire that forgets itself or that is unaware of itself, and gradually it draws near to the holiness of innocence. Such is the very secret of education: its art consists in attracting someone towards the good by action, thus fixing the inclination for it.⁵⁹ In this way a *second nature* is formed.

Hence at the centre of the soul itself, just as in this inferior world that it animates and that it is not, the unreflective spontaneity of desire and the impersonality of *nature* are to be found again as forming the limit to which the progress of habit makes action return; and here again it is the natural spontaneity of desire that is the very substance of action, at the same time as being its source and primary origin.

désir, l'impersonnalité de la *nature*; et ici encore c'est la spontanéité naturelle du désir qui est la substance même, en même temps que la source et l'origine première de l'action.

Le monde moral est par excellence l'empire de la liberté. C'est elle-même qui s'y propose sa fin, qui se commande et qui exécute l'action. Mais, de même que dans le mouvement, si c'est la volonté qui pose le but dans l'espace, et détermine la direction, ce n'est pas elle, ou, du moins, ce n'est pas la volonté réfléchie qui combine et concerte par avance la production même du mouvement, et que le mouvement ne peut sortir que du fonds de l'instinct et du désir, où l'idée de la nature se fait être et substance; de même, dans le monde moral, l'entendement discerne la fin, et la volonté se la propose, mais ce n'est pas la volonté, ce n'est pas l'entendement abstrait qui peut remuer d'abord dans leur source les puissances de l'âme pour les pousser au bien.⁶⁰ C'est le bien lui-même, du moins l'idée du bien, qui descend dans ces profondeurs, y engendre et élève à soi l'amour. La Volonté ne fait que la forme de l'action; la liberté irréfléchie de l'Amour en fait toute la substance, et l'amour ne se distingue plus de la contemplation de ce qu'il aime, ni la contemplation de son objet; c'est là le fonds, la base et le commencement nécessaire, c'est l'état de *nature*, dont toute volonté enveloppe et présuppose la spontanéité primordiale. La nature est toute dans le désir, le désir dans le bien qui l'attire. Ainsi se vérifie à la rigueur cette profonde parole d'un profond théologien; «La nature est la grâce prévenante». C'est Dieu en nous, Dieu caché par cela seul qu'il est trop au-dedans, et dans ce fonds intime de nous-mêmes, où nous ne descendons pas.⁶¹

V. Enfin, jusque dans la sphère de l'entendement pur et de la raison abstraite,⁶² la loi de l'habitude se retrouve encore, et par conséquent aussi le principe de cette loi, la spontanéité naturelle.

L'entendement se développe en même temps et dans le même sens que l'activité motrice, en sens inverse de la sensibilité, et de la passivité en général.⁶³ La passivité n'y est pourtant pas entièrement nulle. L'entendement, distingué de l'intuition simple, n'est pas l'activité toute pure. Toute perception distincte et toute idée implique, comme nous l'avons vu, une diversité qu'on se représente sous la forme d'une étendue, et dont on parcourt les intervalles par la pensée. Toute opération de l'entendement enveloppe l'imagination d'un mouvement. C'est le caractère qui l'a fait justement nommer la *raison discursive*. Or, on l'a vu également, tout mouvement implique, à quelque degré que ce soit, la passion. Tantôt c'est l'objet de l'entendement qui lui donne l'impulsion; il est alors comme entièrement

The moral world is the highest domain of freedom. It proposes its own end to and for itself, and it commands itself in executing action. But, just as in movement, if it is the will that poses the goal in space, and determines the direction, it is not the will – or at least it is not reflective will – that works out and devises in advance the very production of movement; for this can only arise from the depths of instinct and desire, where the idea of nature becomes being and substance. In the same way, in the moral world the understanding distinguishes the end and the will proposes it, but it is neither the will nor the abstract understanding that can initially stir the powers of the soul at their source so as to push them towards the good.⁶⁰ It is the good itself, at least the idea of the good, which descends into these depths, engendering love in them and raising that love up to itself. Will constitutes only the form of the action; the unreflective freedom of Love constitutes all its substance, and love can no longer be distinguished from the contemplation of what it loves, nor contemplation from its object; and it is this that forms the source, the basis and the necessary beginning: this is the state of nature, whose primordial spontaneity envelops and presupposes all will. Nature lies wholly in desire, and desire, in turn, lies in the good that attracts it. In this way the profound words of a profound theologian might be confirmed: ‘Nature is prevenient grace’. It is God within us, God hidden solely by being so far within us in this intimate source of ourselves, to whose depths we do not descend.⁶¹

V. Ultimately, even in the sphere of the pure understanding and of abstract reason,⁶² the law of habit is still to be found, and consequently also the principle of this law, namely natural spontaneity.

The understanding develops at the same time and in the same direction as motive activity; it develops in the opposite direction to sensibility and to passivity in general.⁶³ Yet passivity is not completely nullified in it. Understanding, distinguished from simple intuition, is not pure activity. Every distinct perception and every idea implies, as we have seen, a diversity represented in the form of an extension, whose intervals are traversed in thought. Every operation of the understanding envelops the imagination with a movement. It is this characteristic that has led it rightly to be named *discursive reason*. Yet, as we have also seen, every movement implies, to whatever degree, passion. Sometimes it is the object of the understanding that provides the impulsion; in this case, it is as if it were completely passive. Sometimes the understanding sets itself in motion, and in this case it combines passion and action within itself: the former in its movement, the latter

passif. Tantôt c'est lui qui se met lui-même en mouvement, et alors il réunit en soi la passion et l'action: celle-là dans son mouvement; celle-ci dans l'attention qui fixe au mouvement intellectuel sa direction et sa fin.

Ici encore la continuité ou la répétition exerce, sur la passivité et sur l'activité, une influence contraire.

Toute perception, toute conception inattentive, involontaire, et, par conséquent, passive jusqu'à un certain point, s'efface peu à peu si elle se prolonge ou si elle se répète. Elle ne disparaît pas aussi complètement que la sensation ou le sentiment; mais elle devient de plus en plus confuse, et de plus en plus échappe à la mémoire, à la réflexion, à la conscience. Au contraire, plus l'entendement ou l'imagination s'exercent à la synthèse successive des idées ou des images, plus elle leur est facile; plus elle devient prompte, assurée et précise; plus en même temps elle devient une tendance indépendante de la volonté. Les mouvements passifs de l'entendement tournent aussi de plus en plus au penchant. Ce ne sont pas, comme on l'a supposé, les idées ou les images qui s'appellent pour s'associer, qui s'attirent ou qui se précipitent les unes vers les autres avec une vitesse croissante, comme des corps gravitant dans l'espace. Dans des images et des idées il n'y a pas de mouvement et de principe de mouvement. Ce n'est pas l'*association des idées* qui explique l'habitude;⁶⁴ c'est par la loi, c'est par le principe de l'habitude que s'explique l'association des idées. Ce penchant où l'activité de l'entendement et de l'imagination s'absorbe par degrés, c'est la spontanéité naturelle développée dans le mouvement, entraînant comme dans un courant rapide, l'attention, la volonté, la conscience elle-même, dispersant en même temps et répandant de toutes parts en une diversité indéfinie d'idées et d'images indépendantes, comme en une vie diffuse et multiple, l'unité et l'individualité de l'intelligence. Ainsi, dans le torrent de la circulation, succèdent de plus en plus à l'impulsion première du cœur, à mesure qu'on s'en éloigne, la tonicité propre et l'énergie diffuse des ramifications du système vasculaire.

Enfin, cet état de *nature*, où l'habitude réduit la pensée, comme elle y ramène la volonté et le mouvement, c'est la condition et la source première de toute pensée distincte, comme c'est celle de toute volonté expresse et de tout mouvement déterminé. Comment délibérer de saisir dans le présent ou de ressaisir dans le passé une idée absente? Ou l'on cherche ce que l'on sait, ou l'on ne sait ce que l'on cherche. Avant l'idée distincte que cherche la réflexion, avant la réflexion, il faut quelque idée irréfléchie et indistincte, qui en soit l'occasion et la matière, d'où l'on parte, où on s'appuie. La réflexion se replierait vainement sur elle-même, se poursuivant et se fuyant à l'infini.⁶⁵ La pensée réfléchie implique donc l'immédiation antécédente de

in the attention that determines a direction and a purpose in the intellectual movement.

Here, still, continuity and repetition exert opposing influences on passivity and activity.

Every perception and conception that is inattentive, involuntary – and consequently passive to a certain degree – is gradually diminished as it is prolonged or repeated. It does not disappear as completely as sensation or feeling; but it becomes more and more confused, and increasingly escapes memory, reflection and consciousness. In contrast, the more the understanding and the imagination exert themselves on the successive synthesis of ideas or images, the easier this becomes for them and the more their exercise becomes prompt, assured and precise; at the same time, it becomes a tendency that is more and more independent of the will. The passive movements of the understanding become, more and more, an inclination. It is not, as has been supposed, the ideas or images that call one another to come together, that attract, or that move towards each other with increasing speed, like bodies gravitating in space. In images and ideas there is no movement or principle of movement. It is not the *association of ideas* that explains habit;⁶⁴ it is rather by the law, by the principle of habit that the association of ideas can be explained. This inclination, into which the activity of the understanding and imagination is gradually absorbed, is natural spontaneity, developed in movement and dragging with it, as if in a rapid current, attention, will and consciousness itself, at the same time dispersing and scattering everywhere in an indefinite diversity of independent ideas and images – as if in a diffuse and multiple life – the unity and the individuality of intelligence. In this way, the first impulsion of the heart in the torrent of circulation is succeeded, as one grows older, by the proper tonicity and the diffuse energy of the ramifications of the vascular system.

In the end, this state of *nature* to which habit leads thought back, as it leads back the will and movement, is the condition and the primary source of any distinct thought, as it is of any express will and of any determinate movement. How can we deliberate about grasping in the present or retrieving from the past an absent idea? Either we are looking for what we already know, or we do not know what we are looking for. Before the distinct idea that reflection searches out, before reflection itself, there must be some kind of unreflective and indistinct idea, which occasions reflection and constitutes its matter, its beginning and its basis. Vainly would reflection withdraw into itself, for it would only seek and yet escape itself forever.⁶⁵ Reflective

quelque intuition confuse où l'idée n'est pas distinguée du sujet qui la pense, non plus que de la pensée. C'est dans le courant non interrompu de la spontanéité involontaire, coulant sans bruit au fond de l'âme, que la volonté arrête des limites et détermine des formes.

En toute chose, la Nécessité de la nature est la chaîne sur laquelle trame la Liberté. Mais c'est une chaîne mouvante et vivante, la nécessité du désir, de l'amour et de la grâce.

VI. En résumé, l'Entendement et la Volonté ne se rapportent qu'à des limites, à des fins, à des extrémités. Le mouvement mesure les intervalles. L'intervalle implique la continuité, indéfiniment divisible, du milieu. La continuité implique le moyen terme indivisible, où, dans toute l'étendue du milieu, à quelque distance que ce soit de l'un ou de l'autre extrême, les extrêmes se touchent, et les contraires se confondent. L'intelligence des limites, comme de limites distinctes, enveloppe donc l'intelligence des milieux; et le vouloir d'une fin, le vouloir des moyens. Ce vouloir et cette intelligence ne peuvent encore être médiats, et ainsi à l'infini. Jamais on n'épuiserait, et jamais, par conséquent, on ne réintégrerait le milieu, indéfiniment divisible. L'intelligence et la volonté médiate des extrémités enveloppent donc une intelligence et une volonté immédiates des milieux. L'intelligence et la volonté immédiates sont comme le moyen terme en mouvement dans toute l'étendue du milieu. Les extrêmes s'y touchent partout, le principe et la fin s'y confondent. Cette intelligence immédiate, c'est la pensée concrète, où l'idée est confondue dans l'être. Cette volonté immédiate, c'est le désir, ou plutôt l'amour, qui possède et qui désire en même temps. Cette pensée et ce désir, cette idée substantialisée dans le mouvement de l'amour, c'est la Nature.

L'entendement et la volonté ne déterminent rien que de discret et d'abstrait. La nature fait la continuité concrète, la plénitude de la réalité.

La volonté se porte aux fins; la nature suggère et fournit les moyens.

L'Art, œuvre de la volonté, n'a de prise que sur les limites, les dehors, les surfaces; il n'a d'action que sur l'extériorité du monde mécanique, et d'instrument à lui que le mouvement. La nature travaille au-dedans, et, jusque dans l'art, fait seule la profondeur et la solidité.

La Science, œuvre de l'entendement, trace et construit les contours généraux de l'idéalité des choses. La nature seule, dans l'expérience, en donne l'intégrité substantielle. La science circonscrit, sous l'unité extensive de la forme logique ou mathématique. La nature constitue, dans l'unité intensive, dynamique de la réalité.⁶⁶

thought implies, therefore, a prior intuition, immediate and confused, in which the idea is distinguished neither from the subject that thinks it nor from thought itself. It is in the uninterrupted current of involuntary spontaneity, flowing noiselessly in the depths of the soul, that the will draws limits and determines forms.

In every thing, the Necessity of Nature is the chain on which Freedom unfolds itself. But this is a moving and living chain; it is the necessity of desire, love and grace.

VI. In summary, the Understanding and the Will relate only to limits, to ends, to extremities. Movement measures intervals. Intervals imply the continuity, infinitely divisible, of a milieu. Continuity implies the indivisible middle term, where, across the entire milieu, at whatever distance from either of the extremities, the extremities touch one another, and the contraries merge. The comprehension of the limits, as distinct limits, thus envelops the comprehension of the milieu; and the willing of an end, the willing of the means. This willing and this understanding are simply immediate, and infinitely so. Being infinitely divisible, the milieu can never be exhausted, and consequently we can never penetrate it. The mediated intelligence and will relating to the extremities envelop, then, an immediate understanding and will relating to the milieu. Immediate intelligence and will are like the middle term within movement across the entire milieu. The poles touch each other everywhere, the principle and the end merging. This immediate understanding is concrete thought, within which the idea is fused with being. This immediate will is desire, or rather love, which possesses and desires at the same time. This thought and this desire, this idea substantiated in the movement of love, is Nature.

The understanding and the will determine only that which is discrete and distinct. Nature makes continuity concrete, as the plenitude of reality.

The will is oriented to ends; nature suggests and furnishes the means.

Art, the work of will, has purchase only on limits, on surfaces, on the outside; it can act only on the exteriority of the mechanical world, and possesses no other instrument than movement. Nature works on the inside, and, even in art, is the sole constituent of depth and solidity.

Science, the work of the understanding, traces and constructs the general contours of the ideality of things. Nature alone provides, in experience, their substantial integrity. Science defines, by means of the extensive unity of logical or mathematical form. Nature constitutes, in the intensive and dynamic unity of reality.⁶⁶

Entre le dernier fonds de la nature et le plus haut point de la liberté réflexive, il y a une infinité de degrés qui mesurent les développements d'une seule et même puissance, et à mesure qu'on s'élève, à mesure aussi augmente, avec la distinction et l'intervalle des contraires, l'étendue, condition de la science. C'est comme une spirale dont le principe réside dans la profondeur de la nature, et qui achève de s'épanouir dans la conscience.

C'est cette spirale que l'habitude redescend, et dont elle nous enseigne la génération et l'origine.

L'habitude est donc renfermée dans la région de la contrariété et du mouvement. Elle reste au-dessous de l'activité pure, de l'aperception simple, unité, identité divine de la pensée et de l'être; et elle a pour limite et fin dernière l'identité imparfaite de l'idéal et du réel, de l'être et de la pensée, dans la spontanéité de la nature. L'histoire de l'Habitude représente le retour de la Liberté à la Nature, ou plutôt l'invasion du domaine de la liberté par la spontanéité naturelle.

Enfin, la disposition dans laquelle consiste l'habitude et le principe qui l'engendre ne sont qu'une seule et même chose; c'est la loi primordiale et la forme la plus générale de l'être, la tendance à persévérer dans l'acte même qui constitue l'être.

Between the ultimate depths of nature and the highest point of reflective freedom, there are an infinite number of degrees measuring the development of one and the same power, and as one rises through them, extension – the condition of knowledge – increases with the distinction and the interval of the opposites. This is like a spiral whose principle resides in the depths of nature, and yet which ultimately flourishes in consciousness.

Habit comes back down this spiral, teaching us of its origin and genesis.

Hence habit is enclosed within the region of opposition and movement. It remains beneath pure activity, simple apperception, unity and the divine identity of thought and being; and it has for a limit and final end the imperfect identity of the ideal and the real, of being and thought, in the spontaneity of nature. The history of Habit represents the return of Freedom to Nature, or rather the invasion of the domain of freedom by natural spontaneity.

Finally, the disposition of which habit consists, and the principle engendering it, are one and the same thing: this is the primordial law and the most general form of being, the tendency to persevere in the very actuality that constitutes being.

Editors' Commentary

Part I

This first section of the text can appear abstract precisely because it abstracts from Ravaisson's reflection on habit in particular beings. Ravaisson will admit, at the end of Part I, that it is only in reflecting on our own experience that we can gain a full and adequate grasp of habit, but here habit is discussed without any deliberate reference to the human being – nor, for that matter, to any particular being at all. This abstraction is a function of Ravaisson's ultimate aim to show that habit is a power that stretches all the way down, from human life to vegetal life, and that this power cannot straightforwardly be understood in terms of any of the faculties – sensibility, imagination, understanding, reason or the will – advanced in many traditional forms of psychological and philosophical thinking. Habit will, in fact, be shown to be a power that underlies the operation of these faculties.

In the first sentence Ravaisson announces the ontological significance of his inquiry by describing habit as a 'way of being'. This reflection on habit looks not merely at things, at different beings, but at the ways in which these beings exist, the ways in which they *are*. In this light, the phrase 'state of an existence' can be understood as naming both a thing *and* what allows that thing to be, namely its existence or being. Insofar as it is the 'state of an existence considered either as the unity of its elements or as the succession of its different phases', habit is presented here as related to the principle of individuation of particular beings in space and time. Such a concern for being and unity, for being as the unifying principle in beings, betrays the Leibnizian and ultimately Aristotelian heritage of this reflection on habit.

The following two sentences of the text, in delimiting more specifically the object of the inquiry, announce that it is concerned less with acquired habits than with the very acquisition of habit, which, of course, is the condition of the former. Ravaisson's use of the verb *contracter* to denote the acquisition of habit is unusual in French. Literally, 'to contract' means to draw together, which implies both synthesis and a movement of narrowing, tightening, reduction. Both of these senses apply to the phenomenon of habit, for, as the text will show, habit involves the synthesis of repeated elements, and in some cases has the effect of reducing sensation, effort and attention. The French *contracter* is commonly used when speaking of catching or developing an illness, and it seems that Ravaisson seeks to exploit this usage: in the human sphere certain habits (gestures and figures of speech, for example) appear to be contagious in so far as they can be 'caught' – that is, acquired independently of the will and consciousness – through contact with other people. Moreover, in Part II Ravaisson will argue that his analysis of habit offers us a perspective from which to understand illness itself.

Ravaisson makes the ideas of permanence and change fundamental to his account of habit. If an acquired habit is a 'general and permanent way of being', then the word permanent here – and throughout the text – has to be understood to mean enduring, stable, continuous, rather than everlasting. Clearly, habits can come into being and pass away, and thus the permanence attributed to habit is relative to mere transience. It is this relative permanence, or duration, that is implied in the idea of habit as a 'state'.

An acquired habit, however, is not 'merely a state', but 'a disposition, a virtue', or a 'potential'. Here 'disposition' is to be understood in an active sense as being disposed to do something, as having the tendency to do something. Concomitantly, the idea of habit as a virtue is to be understood not only in the original Greek sense of an excellence (*arete*) but also according to the Latin *virtus*, as signifying 'power'. It will become more explicit that this emphasis on activity derives from Leibniz's conception of being as active force, *vis activa*. According to Leibniz, 'active force contains a certain act or *entelechia* and is thus mid-way between the faculty of acting and the act itself, and involves a *conatus*'.¹ This active force involves a tendency, a kind of striving or drive, or a *nisus* – a sort of inclination, as Leibniz claims, illustrating his meaning with the image of a bent bow. Such a tendency will always realize itself, will lead into genuine activity, as long as there is nothing to impede its realization.

This interpretation of habit as drive or an active tendency raises the question of time: habit involves a relationship to both the past and the future,

since it ‘subsists beyond the change which brought it about’, and thus ‘remains for a possible change’. This ‘remaining’ for a future change takes the form of anticipating (*prévenir*), which becomes central to Ravaisson’s account of habit in Part II, Section II. The discussion in this later section clarifies the suggestion here that habit anticipates ‘a change which either is no longer or is not yet’. In the case of what will be called passive habits – those that occur in the realm of sensibility – we can become accustomed to, say, a continuous sound to the point that when the sound ceases there arises a kind of need for it, a need which ‘calls for, invokes’ the sound that ‘is no longer’. In the case of active habits, repeated movements can become so fluent that they spontaneously reproduce themselves, thus anticipating what has ‘not yet’ issued from the will.

Habit, then, is ‘a disposition relative to change, which is engendered in a being by the continuity or repetition of this very same change’. Habit is a disposition, an active tendency, which itself develops through the continuity or repetition of a change. Of course, only certain beings have this disposition relative to certain changes, as Aristotle suggests with the example of the stone that is thrown upwards many times without contracting a habit of moving in that direction. Habit ‘supposes a change in the disposition, in the potential, in the internal virtue of that in which the change occurs, which itself does not change’.²

Section I

The four numbered sections of Part I move up through several strata of beings and discuss the role of habit at each of these different levels. Section I discusses the lowest region of beings: the inorganic realm. This is the ‘primary realm of nature’ (as opposed to the ‘second nature’ identified with habituation), where habit is impossible.

This section begins, like the opening section, in an analytic manner: it presents a guiding ontological definition or assertion that will be elucidated and justified in the lines that follow. The claim here is that the ‘the universal law, the fundamental character of a being is the tendency to persist in its way of being’. It was noted above that the general idea of being as tendency, as active force, is grounded in the work of Leibniz; this more specific interpretation of being as a tendency to persist or persevere (*persévérer*) in its way of being has the same origin, and Ravaisson accounts for it with reference to the particular way of being that is movement. The issue of movement arises because the inorganic realm appears to consist of bodies moving

through space and in time. (If space and time are understood here in a Kantian fashion as conditions of the possibility of experience, then in a less orthodox Kantian manner Ravaisson describes space as the primary condition of *stability* in beings, and time as their primary condition of *change*.) Against classical Newtonian dynamics, which has no concept of force explaining why bodies persist in their movement when unaffected by other bodies, Leibniz posits a motive or living force, a *vis viva*, which would account positively for inertia – that is, for the fact that ‘a body considered in itself retains any impetus imparted to it, and . . . remains *constant* in its mobility’. According to this dynamic interpretation of inertia, a body ‘has a tendency to persevere in whatever sequence of changes it has begun’.³ In the same manner, a being at rest possesses a passive force that is a tendency to remain in that state of rest; and in this way ‘matter resists being moved by a certain *natural inertia*’.⁴

It is worthwhile to note here that this active interpretation of inertia will allow Ravaisson to trace continuity in nature all the way from the inorganic realm to conscious life in the human being. As he writes in his report on nineteenth-century French philosophy, if inertia, for Leibniz, is ‘opposed as such to the will, with its changing resolutions’, then it is nevertheless ‘at bottom, of an analogous nature’.⁵ The inorganic realm would not be wholly ‘dead’ insofar as it possesses a minimal share in the active principle underlying all that is. This thesis is essential to Ravaisson’s ‘spiritualism’.

On the basis of his retrieval of the Leibnizian interpretation of inertia, Ravaisson can claim that if permanence and change, as conditioned by space and time, are the most basic determinants of existence, then the two are not simply opposed to each other, for within change itself there is ‘a tendency to persist’, and thus a tendency towards permanence. However, this power of inertia governing the inorganic realm does not suffice to constitute individual beings in which habit can develop. Although this section begins by discussing the locomotion of particular bodies as ‘extended mobiles’, Ravaisson argues that in the inorganic sphere there is no ‘veritable’ unity, no genuine principle of the individuation of beings. The diverse forms of change – and thus of union or synthesis – that operate in this realm produce only apparent unities.

The first of these forms of change is mechanical union, the result of locomotion, which is merely apparent due to the infinite divisibility of space as a homogenous whole. Here Ravaisson takes up Leibniz’s argument, against Descartes, that extension gives us no basis for understanding individuation. There is as little genuine unity to be found in what Ravaisson posits as higher

forms of union, the 'physical' and the 'chemical'. In exemplifying physical union by the idea of two 'electricities' that would cancel each other out in coming together, Ravaisson is referring to Charles François de Cisternay du Fay's (1698–1739) distinction between 'vitreous' and 'resinous' electricities, which we now know as positive and negative charges. Insofar as the elements cancel each other out, this form of union can produce no genuine unity. Similarly, if chemistry, after John Dalton's early-nineteenth-century atomic system of 'chemical philosophy', attempts to account for chemical union in terms of indivisible atoms – whereby the result of the union would be different from the reacting 'substances' by means of their 'affinities' or occult capacities – then Ravaisson argues that such ultimate and indivisible chemical unities will never be found. The development of sub-atomic physics and chemistry in the twentieth century lends some support to his claims.

The inorganic realm yields only infinitely divisible homogeneity, and no genuine unity is to be found. Hence it can be said that if this realm pertains to being, since it is not nothing, then it nevertheless does not contain beings; bare matter is only the lowest, weakest level of being. Two other conditions necessary for habit are also lacking in the inorganic realm. First, habit requires the continuity or the repetition of a change through time, whereas in mechanical, physical and chemical changes the syntheses occur as instantaneous transitions: 'the change does not seem to occur in a measurable time. Between what could be and what is, we see no milieu, no interval'. Second, if these forms of change seem to occur as an 'immediate passage from potentiality to actuality' – as in, say, a chemical reaction – then the power or potentiality which makes them possible is destroyed in the transition, whereas habit is a potentiality that is developed through change. This is not to deny that in chemical union the result produced by the reaction will have its own potentiality, a power to react (that is, an affinity) with other substances, but the original potential is destroyed rather than developed.

Habit, then, requires unity and individuality, and in the immediacy of unorganized being there is 'no determinate substance and no individual energy where potentiality could reside, and where a habit could be established and conserved'.

Section II

Ravaisson moves now to the sphere of organic nature where 'all the conditions of habit seem to come together at once': immediacy gives way to internal difference; homogeneity gives way to heterogeneity and succession;

indeterminacy gives way to unity. Change is no longer 'an immediate reunion or combination', for there is a genuine passage from the beginning ('principle' derives from the Latin translation of the Greek *arche*, meaning origin and foundation) to the end of the movement, which occurs in a measurable time, not instantaneously. Moreover, organic changes do not destroy the potentiality that is actualized, but rather allow a being to develop its powers or internal potential 'in diverse forms and within different temporal periods'. In other words, there is a genuinely individual being which undergoes organic changes, and whose potentiality develops.

In the organic realm, then, being comes to yield beings. The particular sort of being in question is, of course, the organism, which has organs or instruments (the Greek *organon* means 'instrument'), and thus possesses the unity of a spatial diversity that Ravaissou terms Organization. The organism's unity through time is here termed Life. Living beings can be distinguished from the unorganized bodies that compose the inorganic realm on the basis of their relationship to their environment. Whereas mere bodies are completely 'delivered over' and 'immediately subjugated' to external influences, each living being has, within a changing environment, a distinct, constant nature that constitutes 'its own particular essence'. In other words, the organism capable of habit has, in the midst of its environment, its own relationship to that environment, so that even in being affected by external things it remains distinct from them.

For Ravaissou, then, there is constancy, activity and, ultimately, a form of freedom in the organic realm, and this forbids any mechanistic explanation of nature. It will become clear that understanding nature as incarnate freedom is pivotal to Ravaissou's 'spiritualist' metaphysics – and in this respect it is close to Schelling's philosophy of nature. In this section, however, the issue is addressed in terms of the opposition between receptivity (the ability to undergo change) and spontaneity (the ability to initiate change) that characterizes the organic being as organization of a prior material world. That is, if life 'forms a separate domain' against the background of the world, then this 'is not an independent and isolated world within an outer world'. On the one hand, the organism is to some extent conditioned by this outer world and 'subjected' to its general laws, but, on the other hand, it has the power to initiate change and thereby 'surmounts' and 'triumphs over' these external influences. Such an agonistic conception of life recalls that presented by the physiologist Marie-François-Xavier Bichat (1771–1802), author of *Physiological Researches on Life and Death*: 'life is the unity of functions that resist death'.⁶

In claiming that habit begins where nature as organic life begins, Ravaisson implies that nature is always already ('from the lowest level of life') *second nature*. This brings into question the traditional distinction between nature and nurture, between instinct and habit. (See Part II, Section III, where it is claimed that the difference between habit and nature is 'merely one of degree' and 'can always be lessened and reduced'.) According to Ravaisson, the life of nature involves self-modification: throughout the organic realm, the continuity or repetition of change 'modifies . . . the disposition of the being, and in this way modifies nature'. In other words, habit is immanent to nature and cannot easily be distinguished from it. Operating at the most primitive level of organic life, prior to thought, will and consciousness, the law of habit constitutes a principle of nature.

In the penultimate paragraph of the section, this idea is developed through the presentation of the 'general law' of habit relating both to spontaneity and receptivity: changes that come to a being from the outside alter it less and less in their repetition; changes that a being initiates tend to reproduce themselves with increasing facility. Here, then, is the first expression of the 'double law' of habit that Ravaisson will go on to justify, in Part II of the text, with reference to the phenomenon of habit in our own selves. Ravaisson takes up Pierre Maine de Biran's (1766–1824) distinction between 'two influences' of habit: 'Sensation, continued or repeated, fades, is gradually obscured and ends by disappearing without leaving a trace. Repeated movement gradually becomes more prompt, more precise, and easier'.⁷ However, Ravaisson extends Maine de Biran's analysis of habit beyond the psychological sphere in claiming that, since organic nature or 'life' is characterized by the 'predominance of spontaneity over receptivity', then nature and habit develop in the same direction, so that the higher one goes in the scale of natural beings, the greater is the power of habituation.

The remarks about habit in vegetal life help to crystallize the conceptual schema within which Ravaisson's metaphysics of habit will unfold. The development of habit, along with that of life and nature, emerges from the necessity of inorganic matter. (The 'being' to which plants remain 'close' here signifies *inorganic being*.) The extent of life's emancipation from material necessity depends on the interval between the potentiality and actuality of the being in question: 'for as long as the power whose manifestation is life has only a few levels to ascend in order to attain its goal, then existence is scarcely freed from necessity'.

Section III

Continuing his description of the hierarchy of nature, Ravaisson moves from the sphere of vegetal life to that of the lowest levels of animal life, which involve more complex functions such as digestion and excretion, and more diverse organs.

The distinction between 'two lives', as Ravaisson indicates, derives from Bichat's *Physiological Researches on Life and Death*, which contrasts animal life, characterized as 'the animal existing towards the outside' – that is to say, with a genuine relationship to its environment – with organic life as the 'animal existing on the inside', as nothing more than a 'habitual succession of assimilation and excretion'. Organic life, comprising principally the functions of nutrition, is common to both the vegetal and the animal, whereas animal life adds to these functions the sense organs that allow the animal to move freely in space, to communicate with other animals and thus to establish explicit relations with the world. If life in general consists in a capacity to react to sensory stimuli, then according to this distinction there are, first of all, two different modes of sensibility: in organic life the impressions remain in the part of the organism affected, whereas in animal life impressions are brought back to a 'common centre' – the brain in the case of the human being. Of the various ways in which Bichat attempts to justify this distinction, however, his use of habit as a method should be noted here: according to the *Researches*, habit has only a negligible effect on organic life, whereas it is a powerful influence on animal life, and this fact supports the distinction between the two lives. Ravaisson's remarks in the previous section concerning the influence of habit on vegetal life present a challenge to Bichat's dualism.

Moreover, in focusing on the most basic functions of animal life in this section, Ravaisson draws on the work of Matthieu Buisson (1776–1805), who had also sought to modify the dualism presented by his cousin, Bichat. Buisson highlights the different functions or goals served by particular organs in order to make a correct 'division' of physiological phenomena: the organs of sight, hearing and speech, for example, serve the purposes of, and are governed by, will and intelligence. These organs belong to 'active life', and are to be contrasted with those belonging to 'nutritive life', the functions of which fall into two groups: 'exploratory', comprising the organs of taste and smell, and 'preparatory', comprising digestion, respiration and excretion. Crucially, Buisson argues that these preparatory functions stand, in Ravaisson's words, as an 'intermediary and transition' between the two lives

since will and intelligence are not completely foreign to them; the will can have an effect on breathing, for example, whereas it has no direct purchase on the organs of smell. For Buisson, habit also has some influence on preparatory functions: the stomach can become accustomed to certain foods, just as those suffering respiratory illnesses can become accustomed to breathing in a shallow fashion.

The focus in this section on the transition between vegetal and animal life is a function of Ravaisson's general concern to find continuity throughout the hierarchy of beings – a concern which he expresses in the second and third paragraphs by emphasizing that the hierarchy is a progressive development in 'the relations of existence with the two conditions of permanence and change in nature, namely space and time'. In relation to space, existence ascends from indeterminate form and mobility, through the growth of vegetal forms, to the locomotion characterizing animal life. Concerning time, Ravaisson develops the account Bichat had presented as a justification of the distinction between two 'lives': whilst mere body exists 'in some sense outside of time', without becoming anything, and vegetal life is simply continuous, animal life is characterized by intermittency: by alternation between movement and rest, and between wakefulness and sleep. (Ravaisson will return to this issue of temporality in Part II, Section I.)

Spontaneity, defined as the initiation of movement, manifests itself in this intermittency of animal life because intermittency implies the ceasing and recommencing of activity. And because the continuity or repetition of a change increases spontaneity, it can be said that 'habit reveals itself as spontaneity in the regularity of the periods'. Ravaisson cites instances, evidenced in the contemporary physiological literature, of this tendency towards regular repetition 'without any appearance of a determining cause in the material of the organism' in the functions of animal life. Similarly, in the case of that aspect of the 'double law' of habit pertaining to receptivity, sense organs cease to be affected by stimuli that once irritated them, 'without anything seeming to have changed in the constitution of the organ'.

Prior to this section of this text Ravaisson had cited a poet and two philosophers: Leibniz and Aristotle. Now the references call on a host of physiologists, naturalists and – to use the term that became current in the early nineteenth century – biologists who present different theories concerning the nature of life. Bichat and Buisson are two late, Parisian representatives of the 'vitalist' movement that blossomed in France in the eighteenth century, and which in the most general terms posits a vital principle or force of life in an attempt to find a middle way between Cartesian mechanism and

the 'animist' doctrine that life is a function of the thinking soul. It is this project that underlies Bichat's distinction between organic and animal life, according to which only the latter possesses a soul (*anima*). Yet Bichat's vitalism has been labelled 'plurivitalism' or 'organicism', since life on this account is not a unique property of an organism considered as a whole, but rather a 'unity' (*ensemble*) of functions that preserve the organism from destruction. For Bichat, even though life is ultimately 'unknown in its inner nature', it must be recognized that it is particularized in each organ, and even in the particular tissues proper to each organ.

Bichat's work develops from that of Paul-Joseph Barthez (1734–1806), the most significant of the Montpellier school of vitalists, and doctor to Napoleon. Although his *Nouveaux éléments de la science de l'homme* (1778) initially presents an epistemological scepticism concerning the essence of life, when he comes to contrast his doctrine with mechanism and animism he posits a 'vital principle' underlying the organism as a whole, which although inexplicable is not unknowable: it could be abstracted from phenomena in the same manner, and with the same kind of assurance, as Newton's principle of gravity. The animism against which Barthez reacted, however, was that of the German chemist and physician Ernst Georg Stahl (1660–1743), which had been taught in Montpellier in the 1730s. Stahl held that mechanistic principles were insufficient to account for life and that a conscious soul governs vital functions. He takes up the metaphor of the watch favoured by the Cartesian mechanists to illustrate this: a watch that does not keep time is a mere mechanism, without purpose, whereas one that is accurate is rather an instrument; if, then, the body is like a watch, insofar as it functions it is an instrument of the soul. Such a conception entails obvious difficulties which Barthez exploits in his criticisms: if, say, digestion is governed by the soul, then an explanation is required as to why it is not subject to our volition and intelligence in the same manner as the movement of a limb. Yet Stahl distinguishes between two different modes of knowledge: *logismos* and *logos*. The former is rational thought in its ordinary sense, which concerns representable objects, whereas the latter, governing vital functions, is a sort of intuitive knowledge of things that cannot be brought to mind in the form of an image. In footnotes within Part II Ravaisson will make much of Stahl's distinction, which recalls Leibniz's doctrine of '*petites perceptions*'; and although he generally cites the work of Bichat and Barthez with approbation, it will become clear that his ultimate aim is to defend what he considers to be the ambiguous but nevertheless misunderstood work of Stahl against their criticisms. According to Ravaisson, Stahl did not argue that

consciousness or rational thought always underlies vital functions, but only that the lowest form of life, at one pole, and thought or consciousness, at the other, are two expressions of one infinitely graduated power: *anima*.

Section IV

Still higher up the scale of existence, we find beings able to move themselves through space, and possessing increasingly developed, sophisticated sense organs. Connected to the increasing contrast, in the sphere of animal life, between receptivity and spontaneity (as the latter predominates more and more over the former) is the contrast, and the interval, between actions coming from the external world and the organism's reactions to them. As the 'double law' of habit expresses itself more vividly, both the spontaneity and the receptivity of the being grow more independent of its material aspect. It becomes increasingly evident in higher animals that the effects of continuity and repetition on both receptivity and spontaneity are, in fact, due to a 'hyper-organic cause'. This underlines the thesis that habit as a disposition and tendency is not to be regarded in merely physical terms. As Ravaissou states in the opening passages of the text, it is the disposition of the being – even in the case of vegetal organisms – that is modified by the continuity or repetition of change. So here the term 'hyper-organic' emphasizes that his task is to think habit metaphysically.

The principle of soul or mind (*l'âme*) is introduced at this point, and is described as a kind of junction, 'a centre with the capacity to measure and dispense force'. Echoing Bichat, Ravaissou argues that such a centre becomes necessary in higher animals, in order to regulate the increasingly distant relations between the actions that a being suffers and the reactions it produces. If this is an account of the genesis of the soul it seems rather speculative, but what is important here is the suggestion that the soul has a distinct relation to time, insofar as it operates 'in its own way and in its own time'. Ravaissou seems to equate knowledge and foresight, and to identify the emergence of this faculty with the 'first light' of freedom. The development of such a soul would bring liberation from absorption in presence, in immediate affectivity.

At this stage Ravaissou is discussing the particular forms of intelligent foresight and freedom that seem to be found in certain non-human animals, as well as in the human being. At the top of the hierarchy of beings, however – after nature has taken 'another, final step' – is human life. Possessing perfected organs of movement, and capable of 'the most accomplished form of the freest activity', the human being is characterized by consciousness, will

and intelligence. The term 'consciousness' (*conscience*) is used in a sense that applies exclusively to humans. In Leibnizian terms, if all beings are to some extent capable of perception, then only the human soul is capable of apperception, which can be understood as an awareness of the fact of perception itself as implying a distinction between perceiver and perceived. Insofar as in consciousness it is 'the same being that acts and that sees the act', consciousness is self-consciousness. This is elucidated in Ravaisson's 1840 essay, 'La philosophie contemporaine': 'In consciousness or apperception, what is the reflexive element? This is *me*, it is *myself*. Without this self, there is no consciousness, for to be *conscious* – the word says it itself – is to know *with oneself*, in and from oneself'.⁸

It is this phenomenon of consciousness that, for Ravaisson, provides the key to the method used to construct his metaphysics of habit. The rest of nature we view only from the outside: we see surfaces, not dispositions or powers. Self-consciousness, however, renders these inner powers transparent, since in this case the act and its apprehension 'are fused together'. Consciousness offers access to the 'archetype' of habit (the French *type* signifies 'type' or 'form' not only in the philosophical sense of the essence of a being, but also in the sense of a prototype, mould, figure or symbol), and it is therefore through an analysis of consciousness – that is, within the field of human experience – that Part II of the text will attempt to penetrate the cause of habit, the 'principle of actuality'. To some extent Ravaisson here follows Maine de Biran in adopting an introspective method, and in affirming the belief, to which this method testifies, that the truths of human nature can be discovered through self-reflection. However, *Of Habit* exhibits more confidence in the method of introspection, and expresses a greater philosophical ambition than is manifest in Biran's study of habit. For in this early text Biran argues that 'we know nothing of the nature of *forces*', and resolves to limit the scope of his inquiry to 'the relation and succession of phenomena'.⁹

Part II

Having worked its way up the hierarchy of being to consciousness in Part I, the discussion in Part II begins with consciousness, and eventually works its way back down to the lowest level of primitive nature, showing through a phenomenology of habit the metaphysical continuity underlying the whole hierarchy. In Section I Ravaisson offers his account of consciousness, which draws on the work of Kant and Maine de Biran; Sections II and III form the

pivot of the text in elucidating the influence and force of habit within the sphere of consciousness, before showing how this reveals the essence of nature itself. Sections IV and V apply this analysis of habit to the moral and purely intellectual activities of the human being. Section VI offers a summary of the essay as a whole.

Section I

Parts of this first section, which discusses consciousness and the conditions of knowledge, are among the most difficult in the text. The philosophers from whom Ravaissou borrows in this section are, primarily, Kant and Maine de Biran and, to a lesser extent, Aristotle. He attempts, in fact, to combine Kant's transcendental approach to consciousness with Biran's psychology. On the one hand, following Kant, the analysis outlines the conditions of intelligibility, focusing particularly on the activities of synthesis and representation. On the other hand, Ravaissou takes up Biran's analysis of movement and resistance, and of the consciousness of effort that arises from the relation between these opposing forces. These interpretations of Kant and Biran are brought together, so that the latter's account of effort is taken to apply not only to the movements of the individual's sense organs through external space, but also to the activity of the understanding in the synthesizing 'movement' through the schematic 'space' of the imagination.

Ravaissou begins by establishing a close connection between consciousness, knowing and intelligence. The French *science* has been translated in this section as 'knowing' rather than as 'science' to avoid the latter's association with certain methods of enquiry; it is unlikely that science in this modern, narrower sense could be thought to be *implied by* consciousness. Consciousness is here understood according to the Kantian idea of synthesis, which is unity in diversity. The unity derives from the activity of the subject; unity is form imposed on the diversity of matter, on the 'formless and limitless diffusion' of space.

The category of quantity is fundamental to this process of synthesis. The understanding grasps quantity through a series of operations: distinction of parts; distinction of intervals separating the parts; addition of parts; representation of number in a mental figure or image. Ravaissou is claiming that the understanding relates only to space and spatial things: 'the understanding represents quantity to itself only in the sensible form of extension, in the intuition of space'. The intuition of space is essential to the category of

quantity, and both are necessary for any distinct conception. On this point, the text cites Aristotle's assertions, in *On the Soul* (431a 17-18) and elsewhere, that the 'soul cannot think without an image'. The idea that the understanding is inextricably bound to spatial representation will be taken up by Bergson in his first work, *Time and Free Will* (*Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*).

The work of synthesis performed by the understanding implies time; running though the distinct, co-existing parts of space in order to bring them together into a whole is a process that takes place in time. The question that arises here, then, is how to apprehend, to measure time – an 'uninterrupted flux', a 'limitless diffusion' – when the understanding requires spatial, quantitative representation. (This question will be radicalized by Bergson, for whom it is a matter of conceiving pure, non-quantitative, non-spatialized time.) According to Ravaisson, the subject can measure time only insofar as it is unchanging. On the one hand, the subject is in time, insofar as its experiences and states of mind change continually; on the other hand, the subject 'subsists and remains', being always itself at every moment, and thus can measure change. It is in this way that the 'substance' of the self is 'at once inside and outside of time'.¹⁰ Ravaisson seems to depart from Kant's critical philosophy in describing the self as a substance, and he does not clarify this concept, but perhaps his use of the word can be interpreted as following Leibniz's understanding of substance in terms of force.

Ravaisson then introduces – or rather reintroduces, since the discussion here echoes that of Part I, Section I – the idea of movement. He suggests that the activity of synthesis has to be grasped as a 'continuous passage from one extremity [of extension] to the other'. This movement takes place in the imagination: it is not entirely clear whether the imagination is to be conceived as a faculty that accomplishes movement, or as a kind of field through which movement occurs. Ravaisson emphasizes that this movement is accomplished by a subject who remains 'immobile at the heart of [his] identity'. Crucially, he insists that the synthesizing movement performed by the understanding is *active*, and in some sense voluntary: 'In order to represent the synthesis of diversity in space, it is necessary not only that I be a substantial subject accomplishing movement, at least in the imagination, but also that I conceive it, that I mark its end, and that I will its direction'. This claim will be linked with Maine de Biran's thesis that the activity of the will is the origin of self-consciousness; Ravaisson will suggest that the movement of synthesis accomplished in the imagination gives rise, like physical movement through space, to an awareness of self: 'within every distinct

conception there is enveloped an awareness, more or less obscure, of voluntary activity and personality'.

In an important transitional paragraph, the connections between the concepts of movement, force and effort are clarified. It is effort that, as Maine de Biran argues, gives the subject consciousness of himself, and effort is defined as the meeting point of force and resistance. According to Ravaisson, force signifies the intensive quantity of movement, the degree of reality of movement; force 'measures itself out sparingly' in order to expend just enough energy to exceed whatever resistance is opposed to it. Movement, then, is 'the result of an excess of power in relation to resistance'. Effort brings this relation to consciousness, giving the subject a sense of his own will, his own personality, his own identity. Force and resistance correspond to action and passion (which, we may recall, have been correlated with spontaneity and receptivity in Part I of the text). Just as effort arises from the meeting of force with resistance, so it can be grasped as the coming together of action and passion – in fact, as the 'middle ground' or 'site of equilibrium' between the two.

Action is the 'condition for distinguishing the subject and object of knowledge', and therefore 'the condition of distinct knowledge', whereas passion is 'incompatible with knowledge and distinct consciousness'. More precisely, knowledge is grounded in action insofar as action encounters resistance – that is, passivity – and, in exceeding this resistance, produces movement; distinct consciousness is impossible in pure activity as in pure passivity. In this way Ravaisson reiterates Maine de Biran's account of the relationship between effort and knowledge in *The Influence of Habit on the Faculty of Thinking*:

Effort necessarily entails the perception of a relation between the being who moves, or who wishes to move, and any obstacle whatsoever that is opposed to its movement; without a *subject* or a will which determines the movement, without a something which resists, there is no *effort* at all, and without effort no knowledge, no perception of any kind. If the individual did not *will* or was not determined to begin to move, he would know nothing. If nothing resisted him, he likewise would know nothing, he would not suspect any existence; he would not even have an *idea* of his own existence.¹¹

Perception thus understood is to be distinguished from the pure passivity of sensation in which there is no apperception, no awareness of the self.

The discussion of the operations of the different senses is essentially a summary of Maine de Biran's account of activity and passivity in the senses.

Biran prioritizes touch among the six senses¹² that he recognizes in his study of habit: although touch can be absolutely passive, since being touched implies no movement at all, touch is also the most active sense, since the organ of touch, the hand, is the most mobile of the sense-organs.¹³ According to Biran, 'the organ of touch first offers us the two faculties [of (passive) feeling and of (active) movement] perfectly combined'. It is for this reason that, as Ravaisson suggests, the sense of touch yields the clearest consciousness of effort, and therefore 'the clearest and most assured consciousness of personality'. When resistance to the activity of the sense-organ fades, however, effort diminishes and thus self-consciousness fades too; as Maine de Biran observes,

resistance diminishes progressively . . . the last termination of effort will be the limit and . . . the vanishing-point of all perception, of all knowledge . . . [A]s effort or the motor impression weakens and eventually disappears, the movement is executed without consciousness, without will . . . The impression of effort, which is the common origin of our perceptions and our ideas, is susceptible to an infinity of gradations. It is singularly weakened by repetition.¹⁴

In this way, the 'double law of habit' identified by Ravaisson in Part I – according to which continuity or repetition reduces receptivity and increases spontaneity – can be discerned in the sphere of human consciousness.

The senses of taste, smell, hearing and sight can be understood in the same terms – that is, in terms of activity and passivity, and their relation to consciousness – as the sense of touch. If touch encompasses the entire spectrum from passivity to activity, the other senses can be located within this spectrum insofar as all combine, in different proportions, passive and active aspects. As Maine de Biran argues, taste and smell involve very little movement, and are therefore predominantly passive; hearing might be passive, but listening, he claims, involves some movement inside the ear, and moreover is accompanied by the activity of the voice, which silently repeats what the ear hears and, in this activity, renders it intelligible.¹⁵ Sight involves the co-ordinated movement of both eyes, and this activity produces 'an object of clear perception, of precise measure, of exact science'. Ravaisson's discussion of the different senses invokes the account of the conditions of knowledge presented earlier in the section. Having argued that movement and extension are the conditions of intelligibility, and are thus involved in every distinct conception, he now suggests that taste and smell do not provide distinct knowledge since '[e]xteriority is in no way involved in the representations'

produced by these senses; hearing and sight provide distinct knowledge by means of the activity of movement, which implies extension. In the case of hearing, the activity of the voice turns a sensation of sound 'into a distinct object of imagination, into an idea that has its parts, that can be taken apart and put back together again, explained and taught'. In the case of sight, its object – colour – 'is manifest only in the very form of extension, and consequently only in movement'. Visible extension is 'the highest form of imagination and figure, the ordinary schema of ideas'.

Taken as a whole, then, this section seems to be claiming that the field of consciousness encompasses both the movements of the imagination and understanding – synthesis, representation – and the external movements of the sense-organs. In *The Influence of Habit on the Faculty on Thinking* Maine de Biran had argued that willed physical movement was integral to consciousness; Ravaisson extends this analysis to include the Kantian insight concerning the activities of thought, and suggests that there is continuity between these activities and physical movements. Furthermore, for Ravaisson consciousness is relational: he describes consciousness and its objects not in terms of a distinction between 'inside' and 'outside', but in terms of the concepts of action and passion, force and resistance, movement and effort: movement is a result of an excess of activity, force, in relation to the passive, resisting term, and effort is felt *in* this relation. '[I]t is the development in opposite directions of action and passion that fills the sphere of consciousness'. Moving along the spectrum of the senses, from the relative passivity of taste to the relative activity of sight, Ravaisson finds an increasing predominance of perception over sensation – that is to say, activity over passivity. Here he echoes his earlier claim, in Part I, Section II, that the principle that constitutes life is 'the predominance of spontaneity over receptivity': this 'profound law', he now suggests, is 'manifested in the series of the different senses'. He emphasizes that consciousness disappears at either end of the passive–active spectrum, just as 'personality perishes to the same degree in extreme subjectivity and in extreme objectivity'.

Section II

In this section Ravaisson presents the core of his argument. He first focuses on human consciousness in order to examine within it the particular effects of the 'double law' of habit: '[t]he continuity or the repetition of passion weakens it; the continuity or repetition of action exalts and strengthens it'. He then goes on to locate the cause or metaphysical ground of this law in

an 'obscure activity' that underlies sensibility as well as perception and movement.

Having emphasized that 'the condition, the being of consciousness is to be in time', Ravaissou raises the question of the effects of change within consciousness. He begins to address this question by restating the general law of habit in terms of the specific changes that can occur in consciousness: continuing or repeated sensations gradually diminish, whilst continuing or repeated perceptions and movements become sharper and quicker. But now he develops further the distinctions between activity and passivity, and between perception and sensation, that he established in previous sections, and this development works to destabilize the distinctions and complicate the analysis of habit that has been formulated on their basis. Ravaissou asserts against Maine de Biran that sensibility is never purely passive, just as movement and perception are never purely active. There is always and already a certain activity involved in sensibility, or, as Ravaissou puts it, 'in every sensation . . . mobility and perception have a role'. This view that we do not experience anything like purely passive sensations or impressions becomes a basic tenet of twentieth-century phenomenology: Merleau-Ponty, for example, argues that 'pure sensation, defined as the action of stimuli on our body, is the "last effect" of knowledge . . . and it is an illusion (a not unnatural one, moreover) that causes us to put it at the beginning and to believe that it precedes knowledge'.¹⁶

The effects of the duration or repetition of change can be seen in these passivities-within-activity and activities-within-passivity: as movements become sharper, quicker and more precise, so the passive element within them – that is, the impression of effort – simultaneously diminishes; equally the active perceptual element within sensibility does not diminish as sensation fades, but rather grows stronger. This means that the effect of the continuity or repetition of change on sensibility depends on the proportion of activity and passivity – which 'are inversely and proportionally related to each other' – in any given case, and will therefore vary from person to person and from situation to situation. In order to illustrate his point, Ravaissou compares the indiscriminate drinker with the connoisseur: in the case of the former, passivity dominates, and as he drinks more his sense of taste, and thus his sensation of pleasure, is dulled. In the case of the latter activity dominates – the activities of distinction, representation, knowledge and judgement – and, with practice, his sense of taste is sharpened and clarified. It is by virtue of this activity, it is argued, that the pleasure in drinking is able to increase over time rather than fade in the manner of a mere passive sensation.

A certain asymmetry between pleasure and pain is identified: '[a]s the sensation gradually diminishes, so too do the pleasure and pain attached to it – particularly the pain'. Ravaillon seems to be suggesting that, since '[a]ction and pleasure are bound together', the element of activity within sensibility itself produces pleasure – either because it seeks to preserve pleasant sensations, or because activity as such is inherently pleasurable. Even in the case of painful sensations, then, this element of activity 'gradually disentangles the pleasant feelings caught up in them, and, when the pain disappears, retains and develops the pleasure'. We might cite as examples here Aristotle's claim that virtue becomes more pleasurable as it is practised and perfected, or the way in which learning to drive a car or play a musical instrument usually involves a certain strain, fatigue and frustration at the early stages, but becomes increasingly enjoyable as proficiency develops.

In showing that activity and passivity in consciousness do not stand separately in two independent and self-sufficient faculties – however 'agonistic' the story of the two powers may be – Ravaillon comes to the point at which he can reveal the 'common trait' within the 'double law' of habit. This common trait at work in both passivity and activity is an 'obscure activity' that consists in a kind of anticipating (*prévenir*). In sensibility, this anticipating manifests itself as a 'need'; in movement, it manifests itself as a 'tendency'. Within sensibility, need appears as sensation fades: if the change that causes a sensation ceases, the individual desires its return and feels upset by its absence; sensibility 'calls for, invokes, implores' the missing sensation. Within movement, on the other hand, as effort recedes, and as action is facilitated and perfected, the action turns into a tendency, 'an inclination that no longer awaits the commandments of the will but rather anticipates them'. Movement comes to occur before any explicit act of thought, and eventually this tendency anticipates the will and consciousness to such an extent that it seems to escape them altogether. In these forms of 'anticipating' – the need for the sensation, the reproduction of the action – there is an activity at work, one that is 'obscure' insofar as it is at a certain remove from consciousness, judgement and the will.

Ravaillon proceeds to elucidate the nature of this activity that manifests itself as need and tendency. Concerning need, he asserts that '[t]he necessary condition of passion' – that is, passivity, affection, sensation – 'is the contrast between the present state of the subject experiencing it, and the state to which the cause of the passion tends to bring him'. Although the justification of this argument with reference to Aristotle is problematic, since the passage cited from *On the Soul* presents two sides of a dispute concerning

whether like can be affected by like, it has a more immediate justification in experience: in order to notice, for example, the temperature of water in which I have placed my hand, it is necessary that my hand be of a different temperature to the water. Ravaissou expands on such an idea, then, to argue that sensation as such rests on a 'contrariety between the state of the sensed object, and the state of the sense itself'. This means that if sensations diminish in their repetition or continuation, it is the difference between the states of the object and of the sense which is reduced. In the case of the hand in water, this narrowing can be accounted for in physical terms, that is, in terms of a change of temperature in the hand. But in other cases of the continuity or repetition of a sensation, as has already been noted, there is no physical change in the sense-organ to be found. In order to explain the narrowing or reduction in these cases, it is, in fact, necessary to posit a non-physical 'tendency to persist in the same state to which the impression has brought it'.

This 'tendency to persist' is an expression of the Leibnizian principle of inertia that is discussed in Part I, Section I, and to which Ravaissou returns in the final lines of the text. The argument here is that in sensibility the law of inertia is revealed in the production, by a continued or a repeated change, of a sort of equilibrium, which is upset if the change stops. For example, sensibility preserves the impression of a repeated noise or movement and therefore comes into equilibrium with it, so that further impressions make no difference. So, in the case of a young child, 'a continual swinging or rocking, or a monotonous noise' dulls his sensibility and induces sleep. Rest or silence will disturb this equilibrium, producing a lack, a need, a desire for the return of the motion or the noise: the child wakes up, and starts to cry. Hence it can be argued that the noise and movement 'only induce sleep by developing in the sensory organs a sort of obscure activity which brings them up to the tone of the sensation'. Such an activity 'destroys' sensation, 'but at the same time creates a need for it'. In this way, then, Ravaissou tries to show that the progressive weakening of passivity in the continuity or repetition of a change must be explained by 'the progressive development of a sort of internal activity'.

The obscure, internal activity in the development of tendencies to reproduce movement is likewise an instance of inertia. As has already been noted, within movement there is evidently an element of passivity: the subject who initiates movement is at the same time affected by it, suffers it. Ravaissou argues that it must be in this passive aspect of movement that a 'secret' activity develops: if the progress of habit consists in movement becoming more involuntary, then the activity cannot be attributed to the will. He insists that

habit does not affect the activities of the will and the intelligence directly, but rather lessens resistance to them, by 'pulling down the obstacles before them'. As he suggests at the end of this section, attempts to explain the increasing ease of movement by the hypothesis that intelligence 'knows better all its parts', and that the will 'works out the action with more precision and assurance', fail to do justice to our experience, since 'the increasing facility of movement coincides with the diminution of will and consciousness'. Movement does not become habitual with an increase, but instead with a decrease, of conscious thought processes. Therefore the increasing facility of movement can be attributed neither to the will nor to intelligence, but to 'a more obscure and unreflective tendency which goes further down into the organism'.

In the next section such an apparently contradictory idea of a 'hyper-organic' tendency that nevertheless goes deep into the organism will be developed and clarified. Ravaissou concludes this section, however, by underlining how his thesis is equally opposed to both physicalist and rationalist, or – to use the terms preferred by Merleau-Ponty – to 'empiricist' and 'intellectualist' accounts of habit. He opposes physicalist or materialist accounts by emphasizing that the tendencies produced by habit in both sensibility and movement cannot be explained by a hypothesized physical modification of the organism. He also criticizes the attempt to explain habit by the psychological doctrine of attention, according to which the disappearance of sensation can be attributed to the movement of attention away from the impression in question. Although such a mode of explanation is not groundless, it is at best incomplete since it would struggle to account for the subject's need for the absent sensation, and for the decline of thought in habitual movements. It is on this basis that Ravaissou can argue that '[t]he law of habit can be explained only by the development of a Spontaneity that is at once active and passive, equally opposed to mechanical Fatalism and to reflective Freedom'. This spontaneity exemplifies and justifies, here at the top of the hierarchy of beings, in the sphere of consciousness, the general principle of inertia that Ravaissou posited at the beginning of the text – a principle according to which being as such and in general consists in a tendency to persist in whatever particular way of being a being has.

Section III

This section draws out the ontological implications of the discovery within habit of a spontaneity that is 'at once active and passive'. Ravaissou shows

how this undermines traditional oppositions between mind and body, freedom and determinism, the ideal and the real.

Ravaisson insists that the progress of habit does not consist in conscious and voluntary movements becoming blindly mechanistic, mere automatic reflexes: although a movement, as it becomes less conscious, 'leaves the sphere of will and reflection, it does not leave that of intelligence'. Consequently, Bergson's claim that habit is 'the fossilised residue of a spiritual activity'¹⁷ would seem to diverge from the account developed here, according to which habit is itself a spiritual (i.e. intelligent) activity. The tendency produced by habit remains purposeful even though it ceases to be reflective, since it inclines towards a goal first chosen by the will. Intelligence, therefore, is presented here as a capacity that precedes and exceeds that of the will and reflection. Habitual movement gradually becomes a sort of purposeful, but unreflective, inclination (*penchant*). In detaching itself from the activity of the will, the inclination must nevertheless be understood to 'follow from' the will, and not to oppose it – unless, of course, the goal proposed by the will changes.

This intelligence as inclination is 'immediate' insofar as '[t]he interval that the understanding represents between the movement and its goal gradually diminishes': the beginning and the end of the movement, its mere possibility and its final actuality, merge to the degree that the movement occurs without explicit understanding or reflection. The aim that was first posited in consciousness by the will as an 'ideal' or 'idea' is realized by means of habit without the mediation of consciousness. Consequently, it can be said that in the progress of habit '[t]he *idea* becomes *being*', and that habit itself becomes 'more and more a *substantial idea*', a union or fusion of the ideal and the real, of thought and being. Through habit ideas come to be embodied, made flesh; the body and the organs of movement come to be animated by a form of intelligence that is a '*real* intuition'. Beyond the 'sphere of personality', which is to be understood as the self-possession of a reflective subject, intelligence instantiates itself in the organs of movement in such a manner that it becomes the 'way of being, even the very being of these organs'. The argument is, then, that habit forces us to revise the radical opposition between mind and body that we have inherited from Descartes; it leads us to recognize a third term between the translucency of reflective thought and the opacity of a mechanical body. We can compare Ravaisson's emphasis on the immediacy produced by habit with his description of 'primary nature' – that is, the lowest level of being – in Part I, Section I. Primary nature is characterized by immediacy, by 'an immediate

passage between potentiality and actuality', and the progress of habit leads towards this.¹⁸

There is continuity in the progress and regress of habit. As habits form, inclinations come to replace the will 'by a succession of imperceptible degrees'; as habits are broken, this process is reversed, and movements are reclaimed by the will. Just as consciousness declines in the former case, so it revives in the latter. In the human being, then, there is continuity between the intelligence, freedom and reflection that characterize the highest level, and all the lower levels that we share with other kinds of being. According to Ravaisson, this continuity can be *felt* by consciousness even in its own fluctuations: as the mobile 'middle term' that is habit moves back and forth, spreading throughout the body and then giving way to the will once more, consciousness *feels itself* 'expire . . . and then come back to life'.

An important idea that emerges at this point in the text is that the hierarchy of being that Ravaisson first introduced as characterizing the universe as a whole, can also be applied to individual organisms. In other words, the cosmic hierarchy is reproduced at the microcosmic level. It should be noted, however, that this transition from cosmos to microcosm will appear in a different light once Ravaisson has made his method more explicit: in fact, it is the phenomenology of habit, within the human sphere, that first uncovers the structure of nature as a whole. At the end of Part I, human beings are introduced as located at the top of the hierarchy of nature, by virtue of their consciousness and intelligence. But human life also includes the characteristics and the functions of lower organisms: with vegetal organisms we share functions of nutrition, for example, and with animals we share the capacities for sensation and for locomotion. So there is a hierarchy of being *within* human life, and it is precisely this hierarchy that habit descends, as ideals pass from the will to the organs.

Ravaisson emphasizes that it is intelligence that underlies the movement of habit from will and reflection to the organic level – and this means that intelligence constitutes the continuity between the different levels of being. Intelligence as a force or activity 'proliferates', 'descends', 'dissolves itself'; it is 'transformed in time and disseminated in space'. On the one hand, intelligence spreads throughout the body, but on the other hand it returns or recedes back into itself, 'attracted' to its own thought, so that it can posit and pursue higher, more purely intellectual ends – and this latter movement occurs *by virtue of* the former. It is *because* intelligence permeates the body that it can multiply its activities: in addition to the goals that are now realized by habitual tendencies, other goals can be achieved by the higher faculties

that have been liberated for them. Putting this aspect of habit in more meta-physical terms, Ravaissou describes it as the final cause increasingly predominating over, and absorbing, efficient causality. In other words, as Ravaissou has already suggested, as tendencies develop the ends of action come to encompass the means towards them, so that the movements are no longer merely *towards* ends, but the immediate realization of these ends.

Any compulsion in the force of habit is thus to be explained not in mechanistic terms, but as 'the necessity of attraction and desire'. The necessity of habit is not opposed to freedom, but 'follows on from the freedom of the spirit', just as habitual tendencies have been said to follow on from the will. The law of habit can be regarded as grace, as a gift given to the subject, insofar as it facilitates action in a way that escapes and relieves the will, reducing effort and fatigue and easing discomfort.

This is the first reference in the text to the theological aspects of Ravaissou's interpretation of habit. Later sections will develop the suggestion that habit is a kind of grace, but here the reference to St Paul implies that Ravaissou is challenging the Christian anthropology expressed in Paul's Letter to the Romans. In Romans 7 Paul contrasts the law of the flesh and the law of the spirit – in other words, the law or bondage of sin and the liberating law of grace. The conflict between two laws plays itself out as a conflict within the individual: as Paul writes, 'I can will what is right, but I cannot do it'. Commenting on Romans 7 in his *Confessions*, Augustine identifies Paul's 'law of the flesh' with the force of habit, which opposes his 'new will' to serve God: 'the rule of sin is the force of habit, by which the mind is swept along and held fast even against its will'. Augustine develops the Christian anthropology presented in Romans as he recounts his own inner conflict and struggle:

I was held fast, not in fetters clamped upon me by another, but by my own will, which had the strength of iron chains . . . [For desire had grown from my will] and when I gave in to desire habit was born, and when I did not resist the habit it became a necessity . . . These two wills within me, one old, one new, one the servant of the flesh, the other of the spirit, were in conflict and between them they tore my soul apart.¹⁹

But Ravaissou, the thinker of continuity, rejects Augustine's dualism: the law of habit is not opposed to the spiritual law of grace, but, on the contrary, habit *as principle of nature* is itself a form of grace. On this view, in habit the spirit of love, or grace, permeates the body. This idea will be elucidated in Section IV, where Ravaissou considers habit within the moral sphere.

Having emphasized the continuity, measured by consciousness, between will and nature, Ravaisson now addresses the question of the difference between habit and the prereflective tendencies or primitive drives that constitute what we call 'instinct'. Certainly, it can be said that instinct is less reflective, less fallible and more irresistible than habit, and thus that habit 'perhaps' cannot ever converge with it. Yet for Ravaisson the difference between them 'is merely one of degree . . . and can always be lessened and reduced'. Although habit and instinct are different, they are so only on the basis of the continuity, and thus the infinite divisibility, of existence as a whole, which means that their difference can always be diminished. It should be noted, however, that towards the end of this section Ravaisson will refuse the idea that all instincts can be explained as old, ingrained habits: the instinctual functions of nutrition, for example, cannot be accounted for in this way for it seems impossible to conceive how they ever could have been directed wholly by conscious thought. The claim that instinct can be equated with habit was originally advanced, in order to account for the independence of vital functions from conscious thought, by Claude Perrault (1613–88), an architect – of the east wing of the Louvre – and animist physiologist, who influenced Stahl. For Perrault, such independence was to be explained by means of habit, whereas Ravaisson seems to follow Stahl in arguing that some functions could never have depended on the form of representative intelligence that is *logismos*. Yet if Ravaisson follows Stahl on this point, he does so in stressing the continuity underlying the distinction between *logos* and *logismos*, between intuition and representative thought.

In place of absolute dichotomies, then, Ravaisson proposes a continuum within which opposing 'extremities', 'proportionally and inversely' related to each other, meet by means of a mobile 'middle term' or 'dividing line'. Like the 'now' in Aristotle's conception of continuous time, this middle term is not an existent part of the infinitely divisible continuum itself. Hence just as different degrees of action and passion are mediated in effort, so habit stands as the middle term between Will and Nature as an 'infinitesimal differential' or a 'dynamic fluxion'.

We have arrived at an important moment in the text, because at this point Ravaisson introduces the idea that his analysis of habit is not simply a philosophical end in itself, but also functions as a *method* for responding to wider philosophical issues. Here the claim is that reflection on habit is the 'sole real method' of grasping the relationship between Will and Nature. Such a method is required, since the understanding, insofar as it is based on distinction and separation, can only represent this relationship as

the 'incommensurability' – in Kantian terms, the antinomy – of natural necessity and spontaneous, voluntary freedom. Analysis of habit allows us to overcome this antinomy in that it leads us to perceive the existence of intelligence, freedom and the 'light of consciousness' *within*, and not simply as opposed to, the 'dark night' of nature. Although the light of consciousness fades as habit progresses, it is not extinguished; and because habit carries the force of intelligence within itself as it descends to the lower levels of nature, it illuminates these lower levels. The rest of the section will attempt to justify further the claim that habit is an acquired, 'second' nature that renders primary nature intelligible.

In the light of the preceding remarks on habit and instinct, the claim that habit 'transforms voluntary movements into instinctive movements' has to be understood as asserting that there is a continuum underlying will and instinct. But how does this 'transformation' occur? Even in the most voluntary movement, directed towards a clearly posited goal, the application of motive power – that is to say, the act of the will, the decision to move – to the resistance confronting it escapes consciousness. We do not know *how* an intention to move produces a physical movement; we do not know *how* the mind acts on the body, and reflection or introspection fails to illuminate the obscurity. In the absence of theoretical knowledge, then, it is habit that accounts for practical proficiency: according to the double law of habit, the active aspects of a movement – measuring out the quantity of effort and applying it at a certain point – are perfected with repetition, while the passive element, the feeling of effort, fades away. Organs therefore become accustomed to making effort in a certain way, and struggle to alter this habit. Ravaissou illustrates this point with the example, taken from Barthez, of a man who, because he is used to executing strong movements with his hands, cannot accommodate himself to the lack of resistance in a smaller object such as a pen, and thus 'writes less firmly than another'. By working on the intermediary processes, lost to consciousness, that take place between the will's decision and the accomplished movement, habit turns the posited goal into 'an *idea in action*', a form of life or a way of being on which the will has little purchase.

Ravaissou sums up this discussion by emphasizing that the will's first application to the organ of movement is inexplicable and ineffable, yet not unintelligent since it involves a kind of understanding and intention. Habit affects this inexplicable process, and by this means affects the resulting external movements that one is conscious of, by perfecting activity and lessening

resistance. Throughout the continuum of consciousness, from the most obscure intimations of effort to the clearest representation of a goal, movement tends increasingly spontaneously towards that goal, 'and in this way the movement as a whole occurs as if by itself'.

At this point in the text Ravaisson refers to a problem that Maine de Biran had encountered in *The Influence of Habit on the Faculty of Thinking*. After stating that effort can recede entirely in the absence of resistance, in a footnote Biran writes: '[w]ithout resistance there is neither effort nor will; on the other hand, resistance presupposes *voluntary* movement. It seems therefore that we are turning here in a vicious circle'.²⁰ The problem appears to arise when considering the genesis of effort and perception: both the will and resistance would have to arrive at once, since the one cannot exist without the other. Biran, however, responds to the problem thus:

[t]his difficulty will disappear, it seems to me, if we remark that the first movements of the sentient being are determined by *instinct*, an internal force that is quite real, quite independent of all acquired knowledge and of the *will* properly so called; but the movements whose execution must subsequently be guided by the will, cannot take place by the instinctive act without the individual being aware of it by this particular impression (that we name *effort*), which must be even more vivid at its origin.

Prior to voluntary activity, at the level of sensation, there would already be an 'internal force' of instinct that meets resistance, of which we are aware through effort. Biran argues that this experience of effort explains the genesis of the will: 'the nature of this impression is such that the individual cannot experience and distinguish it, without feeling that he has in himself the power to reproduce it; it is from this *consciousness* or from the *memory* of this power that the will is born . . .'. This argument is problematic since it undermines Biran's general account of effort as the origin of perception and apperception. Ravaisson's response to the apparent circularity of effort and resistance also appeals to an idea of instinct, but it is less problematic since instinct on this account is *effortless*: 'effort necessarily requires an effortless antecedent tendency, which in its development encounters resistance'. The will then 'finds itself in the self-reflection of activity, and is awakened through effort'.

This 'effortless antecedent tendency' is desire, which is introduced in the preceding section as a hidden, secret, obscure activity. The task now is to show how this desire can be illuminated by following the progression of habit into the hitherto concealed depths of nature. Desire has previously

been described as an unreflective, spontaneous activity that, in the development of habit, *follows from* the will, and from reflection, but Ravaisson now argues that desire is prereflective, prior to the will: 'The will, in general, presupposes a prior inclination – one that is involuntary – in which the subject that develops is not yet distinguished from its object. Hence voluntary movement finds not only its matter, its substance, but also its source and origin in desire'.

Here, the thrust of Ravaisson's method becomes clear: the progressive descent of habit down the hierarchy of being is like a genealogy or an excavation that uncovers increasingly primordial principles. As he suggests at the very end of the text, the progression of habit teaches us about the 'origin and genesis' of nature. The truth about desire is reached by reversing the discoveries made through the phenomenology of habit. Habit turns voluntary movements into tendencies, instinctive actions, by wearing down resistance and effort. These tendencies, we have seen, are expressions of desire. By following the progression of habit, we see this desire *developing*, more and more, through continuity and repetition. Moving in the opposite direction, then, we begin with desire: with an unreflective, involuntary tendency that precedes reflection and will. In other words, whereas in habit desire is post-reflective, in nature it is pre-reflective. Just as the end point of habit is a second immediacy, accomplished by the fusion of goal and action, of idea and movement, so desire constitutes the primitive immediacy of nature, a spontaneous 'primordial instinct' in which end and principle are already inseparable.

The contention, then, is that the successive stages that can be distinguished in the development of habit make it possible to differentiate – and thus to comprehend – the powers of nature, from will to instinct, which are present simultaneously in every movement. The human being encompasses all levels of life, from thought to the functions we share with animals, to those we share with plants, right down to molecular movements, chemical changes and 'the most secret vital operations'. These evade the understanding, which as Ravaisson argues in Part II, Section I is limited by its need to form its subject matter into an image, a representation: the 'dynamism of life' is unrepresentable, and therefore inexplicable. Here we find reproduced, in reverse order, the hierarchy of life articulated in Part I; Ravaisson shows that habit influences even the lower functions belonging to organic, 'vegetal' life. He presents several examples of this influence: it is stated that habit can change instinct, a claim that rests on the interpretation of nature as something other than a realm of

mechanical necessity. Habit forms temperament, and this seems to take up, again, Maine de Biran's analysis:

every affection, every deterioration that takes place gradually in the organs – even those essential to the maintenance of life – occasions in the individual no particular feeling, but is transformed into *temperament* by its very duration. Thus it is that habit hides from us the troubles and disorders of our function when they are slowly upset, that we pass without perceiving it through successive modifications corresponding to the ages, temperaments, kinds of life, climates, etc.²¹

The body adapts through habit to foreign substances, such as poisons or medicines, so that these become less efficacious. By this process, conditions that would be initially harmful come to be, in the end, 'the very conditions of health'.

Ravaisson also suggests that the 'secrets' of illness and of procreation are similarly revealed through the method of habit. He refers to the work of Joan Baptist Van Helmont (1579–1644), whose theories of physiology and disease were by the nineteenth century generally considered to be outdated, too much imbued with Renaissance mysticism.²² Van Helmont's conception of 'morbid ideas' as an explanation of illness had been criticized for needlessly invoking unseen entities, but Ravaisson argues that the 'substantial idea' that is habit allows us to understand such idealism: illness, on this account, would be neither ideal nor physical but a union of both, 'a concrete and substantial idea beyond consciousness'. Both illness and procreation, it is argued, can be understood according to this living, embodied idea.

The rest of this section presents the movement, by means of analogical reasoning, from reflection on habit in the human sphere to reflection on nature as a whole. The series of functions found in human life 'is itself only the summary of the general development of life in the world'. Ravaisson's claim here is that we can recognize in the external world the same principle – the unreflective spontaneity of desire – that we found at the root of our own nature by tracing the progression of habit from will to instinct. This analogy between human nature and nature as a whole is justified, in the first instance, by the fact that the world, like ourselves, 'presents itself as a continuous progression in which each term is the condition and the matter of all the higher terms, the form of all the inferior terms'. The human being, at the top of the hierarchy of nature, 'is represented, in its parts and in detail, in the whole of the series that envelops it' – that is, in nature as a whole.

So, just as the progression of habit articulates, within the human sphere, the different levels of nature implicit in a single movement, so habit presents these levels as constituting the external world also: 'habit presents in a successive form the universality of the terms that mark in the exterior world, in the objective and immobile form of space, the progressive development of the powers of nature'. In other words, habit illuminates not only the constitution of nature, but its genesis and development. It is only through habit that the continuity of nature becomes accessible to the understanding. As we have seen, the understanding operates according to the form of space, of extension, where differentiation implies limitation, determination. Under these conditions, the continuity and unity of the whole, across the limits that dissect it, cannot be demonstrated or grasped; it remains 'only a possibility, an ideality'. In the progression of habit, however, this possibility is presented as a reality, and even finds a 'proof'.

Now that Ravaisson's philosophical method has been made more explicit, we can consider the status of the 'proof' of nature's continuity and unity that is reached through this method. The phenomenology of habit reveals continuity from will to instinct, and this testifies to the unity of the human being. This insight illuminates nature as a whole only insofar as its constitution is of the same kind, the same order, as that of human nature: only to this extent is the analogy between them justified. Ravaisson suggests that we are part of the unified continuum of nature, and if this is true then he is right to infer by analogy from one to the other; but the metaphysical conclusion about nature is *reached through* the method of analogy. There is, then, a certain circularity between the method of analogy and the hypothesis of continuity: analogy is used to prove the hypothesis, but at the same time the analogy rests on this hypothesis. It is perhaps because Ravaisson is aware of this circularity that he appeals to the fact that the analogy between human nature and nature as a whole is 'the most powerful of analogies'. We may not be able to see directly the inner powers of nature, but we can observe in other beings those functions that they share with ourselves, and with one another: the fact that vegetal life includes the principle of organization present in crystals; that animal life includes vegetal functions; and that human life includes animal and vegetal functions, supports the thesis that higher organisms contain within themselves all the lower levels of being. Within ourselves, habit penetrates 'all the way down' to the stratum of primitive organization shared by every other being, even by crystals. As habit traverses the continuum stretching between the poles of freedom and necessity, the continuity that facilitates this movement is, by this very fact, revealed in it.

Section IV

This section considers habit within the moral sphere, 'the higher and purer regions of the mind and the heart' where man's inner life is lived. Ravaisson here brings together elements of Aristotle's account of virtue and Christian conceptions of love and grace.

For Ravaisson, the moral sphere coincides with the opening-up within the soul of a world that 'increasingly separates and detaches itself' from the body, 'in which the soul has its own life, its own destiny and its own end to accomplish'. This process of separation illustrates rather than disrupts the continuity of the hierarchy of beings: it happens by degrees, and moreover it produces the 'superior life' to which the rest of nature ceaselessly aspires.

In the moral life of the soul, the distinction between action and passion is to be understood in terms of the pursuit of good and evil, and feelings of pleasure and pain that are 'the sensible signs' of good and evil. These feelings (*sentiments*) – pity, for example – are distinguished from, but analogous to, bodily sensations. The law of habit operates in the moral sphere as elsewhere: the continuity or repetition of a change weakens the feelings of the soul just as it weakens physical sensation, and at the same time creates a need for the feeling. Equally, continuity or repetition makes moral activity easier and more assured, by developing within the soul a tendency to act, which anticipates the will and comes to replace it. As Ravaisson has argued in his discussion of pleasure and pain in Part II, Section II, pleasure is not merely passive, but arises also from activity: 'action and pleasure are bound together'. The tendency to act morally, then, 'gradually leads the pleasure of action to replace the more transient pleasure of passive sensibility'. So, for example, an effect of habit in the moral sphere would be the replacement of feelings of pity, which seem to diminish in their repetition (a phenomenon known today as 'compassion fatigue'), by the 'inner joys' of acts of charity. Ravaisson appeals to Aristotle in suggesting that, in this way, 'love is augmented by its own expressions'. When Aristotle claims that 'loving seems to be an act of experience, being loved a passive one; hence affection and the various forms of friendly feeling are naturally found in the more active party to the relationship', he uses the distinction between activity and passivity to explain the tendency of benefactors to love those to whom they give much more than the latter love their benefactors in return.²³

In this moral context, the second immediacy that habit eventually reaches is spontaneous, unreflective virtue; it is like 'the holiness of innocence'.

Initially, virtuous action meets with resistance – presumably consisting of the natural selfishness, laziness or impetuosity that characterize immaturity – but, as in the case of bodily habit, this resistance is worn down by the operation of a ‘secret activity’, which thus facilitates moral action. From Ravaissou’s perspective, then, the Aristotelian idea that education creates habits can be understood more fully: education is an art that consists in facilitating within the student the development of the secret, pre-reflective, spontaneous activity that is identified with habit. In fact, this might illuminate the conception of education that Aristotle advances in the third book of *Physics*, where he uses the relation between a teacher and a pupil to illustrate the concepts of a ‘capacity to make’ (*poiein*) and a ‘capacity to suffer’ (*paschein*). For Aristotle, the teacher turns or leads the pupil towards a possibility of his own being. Passivity is therefore not absolutely ‘passive’, and ‘action’ is not the external imposition of force that would transform something into something that it simply is not. As Ravaissou puts it at the end of his report on *La philosophie en France au XIX^{ème} siècle*, ‘nothing happens without persuasion’.²⁴

Ravaissou’s interpretation of the moral sphere uncovers, then, the same ‘spontaneity of desire’ that is found through the analysis of motor habits. On the one hand, the progress of habit leads eventually to the ‘holiness of innocence’; but, on the other hand, we discover that an unreflective inclination towards the good was there all along, preceding and indeed making possible all moral deliberation. Ravaissou emphasizes that although the goals of action are recognized by the understanding and chosen by the will, the inclination towards these goals comes not from these faculties, but from a less reflective and more fundamental source. This source is at once higher and deeper than the understanding and the will: it is the good itself, as final cause, which ‘descends into the depths of the soul’, engenders love there, and draws this love up towards itself. Just as intelligence is an active power, a force, so ‘the good’ activates love, seeks it out and absorbs it. Just as desire encompasses the whole continuum of nature, so love envelops its own source, object and activity. Here, desire and love seem to be synonymous: ‘Love . . . is the state of nature, whose primordial spontaneity envelops and presupposes all will. Nature lies wholly in desire, and desire, in turn, lies in the good that attracts it’. However, in the final section of the text Ravaissou will distinguish love from desire insofar as the former ‘possesses and desires at the same time’. Whereas desire lacks its object, love is in communion with the beloved and encompasses it.

In describing nature as ‘prevenient grace’ Ravaissou echoes his suggestion in the previous section that habit is ‘a law of grace’. The notion of prevenient

grace can be traced back to Augustine, who distinguishes between the ‘preventive grace’ that brings a person to the point of conversion; the ‘operative grace’ that accomplishes the liberation from sin that occurs at the moment of conversion; and the ‘co-operative grace’ that, following conversion, assists the liberated will’s pursuit of spiritual growth. Preventive grace precedes the will and enables it, in spite of its sinful condition, to choose to seek salvation and to submit to God. For Ravaisson, nature itself can be regarded as the kind of grace that is given prior to action, to assist and facilitate it, because its principle is love, which expresses itself within each individual as a spontaneous desire for and inclination towards the good that precedes the understanding and the will. In the end, this love and desire that constitutes the ‘intimate source of ourselves’ can be identified as ‘God within us’. The ‘profound theologian’ cited here is François Fénelon (1651–1715), Archbishop of Cambrai, royal tutor and advisor at the court of Louis XIV, and author of several works on the religious life that demonstrate his inclination to mysticism.

Section V

Ravaisson now turns to consider the influence of habit in the purely intellectual sphere, and unsurprisingly his discussion draws on the analysis presented by Maine de Biran in *The Influence of Habit on the Faculty of Thinking*. Again we find the distinction between activity and passivity: although the understanding is predominantly active, it still contains a passive element. As Ravaisson has already explained in Part II, Section I, the activity of the understanding includes movement across extension presented in the imagination – and every movement implies some degree of passivity. Perceptions are to a certain degree attentive and purposeful, and thus active, and to a certain degree inattentive and involuntary, and thus passive. As before, the law of habit exerts its double influence: repetition or continuity weakens what is passive and perfects what is active. Passive perceptions do not disappear as completely as passivities in the physical and moral spheres – that is to say, sensations and feelings – but they become more confused and vague, and increasingly escape consciousness, whether in reflection or in memory. The activities of the understanding are converted into spontaneous tendencies, whilst the passive elements are converted into ‘inclinations’, or anticipations of recurrent ideas.

The main concern of this section is to oppose a theory of the association of ideas, according to which it would be ‘the ideas or images that call one another to come together’. A footnote attributes this idea to David Hume,

and in *A Treatise on Human Nature* the Scottish philosopher indeed begins his treatment of the association of ideas by arguing that, beneath and beyond the voluntary operation of the imagination, certain ideas are associated with such regularity that there must be a 'bond of union among them, some associating quality, by which one idea naturally introduces another'.²⁵ These 'qualities produce an association of ideas, and upon the appearance of one idea naturally introduce another'.²⁶ Hume will go on to discuss three principles of such association: resemblance, contiguity and causation. Moreover, he will argue that the last two in particular are to be explained as a function of habit or custom: in short, the more we see two things together in space or in time, the more we are inclined to think of one when we see the other. In accounting for association in terms of custom, however, Hume seems to be led away from his original conception of 'qualities' in ideas: the ground or force of association is to be found not in objects or ideas themselves, but in the inclinations of the 'subject'. In fact, a conception of 'qualities' inherent in ideas is entirely absent from the discussion of association in the later *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*.

What Ravaissou does not state, then, is that Hume moves towards the position that he is advancing here, according to which the association of ideas is to be explained by habit. Hume can in fact be understood to stand, within the lineage of Scottish philosophers, with Thomas Reid and against Dugald Stewart, who, as Ravaissou argues, seeks to explain habit by the association of ideas. Yet although Hume seeks to account for association by means of habit, this account falls some distance short of an explanation. The assertion that a customary or habitual propensity is produced by repetition explains neither what this habitual propensity is, nor how it can be developed through repetition. Under the heading 'custom' Hume merely baptizes a problem, as he admits in the *Enquiry*:

wherever the repetition of any particular act or operation produces a propensity to renew the same act or operation, without being impelled by any reasoning or process of the understanding; we always say, that this propensity is the effect of *Custom*. By employing that word, we pretend not to have given the ultimate reason of such a propensity. We only point out a principle of human nature, which is universally acknowledged, and which is well known by its effects.²⁷

It is Hume's empiricist methodology that prevents him from going beyond recording such effects to discussing their ground or cause, to determining

what such a propensity *is*. Ravaisson, however, is able to see beyond empiricist principles to the question of being, and it is in this ontological light that he characterizes, with all due modesty, his contribution to the debate concerning the association of ideas and habit in his official report of 1867:

Reid had said, but without attempting to prove it, that the association of ideas must be grounded in habit. In contrast, Dugald Stewart, tending much more than his teacher to an explanation by means of phenomena alone, was of the opinion that it is rather habit that must be explained by the succession and the association of ideas. The author of a thesis on *Habit*, submitted in 1838 to the *faculté des lettres de Paris*, in drawing the association of ideas back to this phenomenon, explained habit by the inclination one has to repeat and imitate oneself – an inclination that itself can be reduced to the tendency, to the effort of all things to persevere in the action that constitutes their very being.²⁸

In the sphere of pure understanding and abstract reason, as in other spheres of human life, habit accomplishes a progressive decentralization: the ‘unity and individuality of intelligence’ is dispersed, scattered everywhere. This end point reached by habit reveals ‘the condition and the primary source of any distinct thought’, so that once more we find that what is last in the order of habit is first in the order of nature. The prereflective, immediate ‘intuition’ uncovered by habit is, for Ravaisson, the condition for the possibility of knowledge. In order to perceive anything distinctly, we must already have some indistinct idea of what it is we want to perceive, just as in order to recall something voluntarily we must have some grasp of what it is that we want to remember.

Section VI

Ravaisson concludes the text by bringing together the philosophical implications of the different aspects of his discussion of habit. His summary is concise, even abrupt, but it serves to elucidate the principles of his spiritualist metaphysics.

The first paragraph distinguishes between the mediated and immediate activities of Understanding and Will. Whilst the mediated understanding and will relate only to ‘limits’ and ‘extremities’ – that is, to a beginning and an end, a principle and a goal, a potentiality and an actuality – the immediate forms of these activities encompass the continuous, infinitely divisible milieu that underlies all determinations. Just as habit has been described (in Part II,

Section III) as 'a moving middle term . . . which advances by an imperceptible progress from one extremity to the other', so Ravaissou now states that the immediate understanding and will are 'like the middle term' of movements across the milieu, within which extremities 'touch each other everywhere, the principle and the end merging'. He identifies immediate understanding with 'concrete thought', embodied intelligence, and immediate will with 'desire' or 'love' – the term 'love' being preferable to 'desire' because the latter implies a lack, whereas love signifies a 'plenitude'. Immediate intelligence and desire together constitute Nature itself.

Ravaissou goes on to describe further the difference between the activities of the mediated understanding and will and the activity of continuous, immediate Nature. Art and Science (the activities of the will and of the understanding respectively) work only with surfaces, only in the field of extension; Nature, however, 'works on the inside', and this inner activity is constitutive of the depth and intensity of reality. Two points are to be noted here: first, in his later work Ravaissou will argue that fine art, as opposed to science, can grant us access to this intensive reality. Second, the reference to the *Critique of Pure Reason* in this paragraph is neither faithful nor straightforward. For Kant, it is not knowledge in general but only geometry that constructs its objects in intuition, and yet Ravaissou speaks of Science as 'constructing' and 'tracing' the 'general contours of the ideality of things'; and he does this under the unusual, and unKantian, heading of 'circumscriptive knowledge'. The work of Science thus conceived is, however, opposed to 'constitutive knowledge', which, according to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, must remain hypothetical in order to be legitimate. Yet Ravaissou does not want to privilege hypothetical knowledge over scientific knowledge, but rather to state that the essential nature of beings is accessible to a 'real intuition', which attains, beyond the extensive exterior of things, the intensive depths of reality. This distinction between the intensive and the extensive, the qualitative and the quantitative, intuition and representational understanding, constitutes the basis of Bergson's philosophy in *Time and Free Will*.

Although Ravaissou distinguishes between the immediate and the mediated, his main concern is to make manifest the unity and continuity underlying their distinction. It is 'one and the same power' that animates everything, from the 'ultimate depths of nature' to the 'highest point of reflective freedom'. Ravaissou uses the image of a spiral to encapsulate the continuous unity of nature and consciousness. The spiral is a dynamic continuum that begins with an immediate intensity – that is, with a single point – and which,

viewed from the outside, becomes increasingly spread out as it moves upwards. More precisely, it is extension – the condition of knowledge – that increases as the spiral widens; thus the movement of nature ‘ultimately flourishes in consciousness’. The development of nature to the ‘highest point of reflective freedom’ is like the expansion of desire, its stretching itself out to open up the interval between origin and goal, principle and end, potentiality and actuality, which allows for the distinction of these extremities within the understanding.

From the point of view of human consciousness, towards the top of the spiral, reflective thought can grasp neither the continuity nor the intensive ‘depth’ of nature, since such reflection requires determination, distinction; it requires a spatial form or image. (It is for this reason that Ravaisson himself has to invoke the image of a spiral.) The phenomenon of habit, however, illuminates the movement of the spiral by tracing it in reverse: habit begins with certain movements or changes that are external, conscious and available to reflection, and its progress is a gradual descent to the immediacy and inwardness of natural spontaneity.

Although habit makes manifest the spiralling ascent from primitive nature to consciousness, it remains confined by certain limits, never reaching absolute unity at either end of the scale. In the sphere of habit there is always a distinction, however slight, between the ideal and the real, between thought and being. Because it requires both activity and passivity, habit cannot ascend to the pure activity that is God’s being; it is also limited at the lower extremity by its need for the slightest degree of heterogeneity and potentiality. Ravaisson’s phenomenology of habit discloses the whole of nature stretching between these inaccessible extremities, and in a way accomplishes a revelation of God within nature: God as love, at once the source, the ultimate end, and – between these two – the means of life.

Ravaisson ends by returning to the Leibnizian law of inertia that he introduced at the beginning of the text. The disposition that is habit is nothing but the ‘primordial law and the most general form’ of being itself. It is this that provides the key to the ontology of habit.

Notes

Preface

- 1 *Dictionnaire Robert*.
- 2 Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: Athlone, 1994), p. 70.
- 3 Aristotle, *Physics* VII, 3, 245 b 3-9; and 246 a 11 to 246 b 2.
- 4 André Lalande, *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie* (Paris: PUF, 1926), vol. I, p. 393.
- 5 Xavier Bichat, *Physiological Researches on Life and Death*, trans. Tobias Watkins (Philadelphia: Smith and Maxwell, 1809), p. 34.
- 6 Jacques Derrida, *On Touching – Jean-Luc Nancy*, trans. C. Irizarry, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 137.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 140.
- 8 *Ibid.*, pp. 155–6.
- 9 Kant's hand is evoked twice (*ibid.*, p. 39 and p. 42). This is the hand that Kant discusses in the *Anthropology*. But it would be easy to show that this hand also exerts its grip at the heart of transcendental auto-affection. Indeed, Derrida declares, 'If one were intent on elaborating these Kantian dealings in a more consequential fashion, one would have to turn to the (metaphysical and transcendental) exposition of the concept of time; one would have to go where time is not only the form of an inner sense, but the "*a priori* formal condition of all appearances whatsoever", *all* phenomena, be they internal or external. And there, following in the footsteps of Heidegger, among others, we would find again the great question of pure auto-affection, pure "self-touching" in the movement of temporalisation' (*ibid.*, p. 46).
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 121.

- 11 Ibid., p. 155.
- 12 Ibid., p. 156.
- 13 Ibid., p. 157.
- 14 For there to be subjective identity, the subject must, as we have seen, differentiate itself, but, conversely, the solicitation of alterity must be able to be brought back to the subject. The self, as Ravaisson says, must be able to 'fold back on itself', reflect on itself, apprehend itself at a remove from itself. The problem is the following: if action and reaction are increasingly independent of each other, how can there be a subject, a personality? How are we to explain the subject's escape from the double impasse of being wholly in itself (reaction) or completely outside of itself (pure actuality)? Indeed, 'The subject experiencing pure passion is completely within himself, and by this very fact cannot yet distinguish and know himself. In pure action, he is completely outside of himself, and no longer knows himself. Personality perishes to the same degree in extreme subjectivity and in extreme objectivity, by passion in the one case and by action in the other'. There is a necessity for a milieu, a common ground, which allows the subject to relate to itself in its difference from itself. And milieu is auto-affection. Yet it is precisely at this level that habit comes into play. The central motivation of Ravaisson's book is ultimately, therefore, this self-relation (*entre-deux*) of the subject, the exploration of the milieu that is produced by habit.
- 15 Jean Cazeneuve, *Ravaisson et la philosophie médicale* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1957), p. 52.
- 16 Derrida, *On Touching*, p. 158.
- 17 Ibid., p. 179.
- 18 Cazeneuve, *Ravaisson et la philosophie médicale*, p. 51.
- 19 Ibid., p. 61.
- 20 Exactly the same analysis is to be found in Hegel, who asserts: 'The animal finds itself in the state of illness, in that one of its systems or organs, stimulated by conflict with the inorganic power, focuses on itself and persists in its particular activity in the face of the activity of the whole, whose fluidity and process traversing all the moments are, consequently, prevented'. *Philosophy of Nature, Part Two of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), §371.
- 21 Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind, Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, trans. William Wallace and A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), Remark following §410.
- 22 Derrida, *On Touching*, p. 179.

Editors' Introduction

- 1 The work has recently been re-edited in one volume: Félix Ravaisson, *Essai sur la Métaphysique d'Aristote* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 2007).

- 2 Henri Bergson, 'The life and works of Ravaisson' in *The Creative Mind*, trans. Mabelle L. Andison (New York: Philosophical Library, 1946), p. 266.
- 3 Félix Ravaisson, 'Jugement de Schelling sur la philosophie de M. Cousin, et sur l'état de la philosophie française et de la philosophie allemande en général', in *Revue germanique*, III, 10 (1835): 3–24.
- 4 F. W. J. Schelling, *Sämmtliche Werke* (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta), vol. XI, p. 328.
- 5 Bergson, 'The life and works of Ravaisson', p. 290.
- 6 Félix Ravaisson, *Rapport sur la philosophie en France au XIX^{ème} siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 1984), p. 320.
- 7 See Arthur O. Lovejoy, 'Some antecedents of the philosophy of Bergson: the conception of "Real Duration"', *Mind* XXII, 10 (1913): 468.
- 8 See Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin (London: Vintage, 1996), vol. V, pp. 478, 621.
- 9 Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. Mary Gregor (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), pp. 148–9. See also *The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), ms 6.407: 'An aptitude (*habitus*) is a facility in acting and a subjective perfection of choice. – But not every such facility is a free aptitude (*habitus libertatis*); for if it is a habit (*assuetudo*), that is, a uniformity in action that has become a necessity through frequent repetition, it is not one that proceeds from freedom, and therefore not a moral aptitude'.
- 10 David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902) p. 44.
- 11 Bichat, *Physiological Researches on Life and Death*, p. 34.
- 12 *Ibid.*, pp. 36–7.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 40.
- 14 Maine de Biran, *The Influence of Habit on the Faculty of Thinking*, trans. Margaret Donaldson (Boehm, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1970) p. 219.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 55.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 92.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 97.
- 18 See *ibid.*, p. 88.
- 19 Maine de Biran, *Influence de l'habitude sur la faculté de penser*, p. 179n.
- 20 See Maine de Biran, *The Influence of Habit on the Faculty of Thinking*, p. 70: 'When this tendency passes from the virtual to the actual, as a result of renewed external stimulation, the individual wills and executes the same movement'.
- 21 See *ibid.*, p. 108.
- 22 *Ibid.*, pp. 49; 100–1.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 104.
- 24 See Pierre Rodrigo, 'La dynamique de l'hexis chez Aristote. L'état, la tenue et la limite', *Alter* 12 (2004): 11–26.

- 25 See Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* 1103 a 15–b 25: 'moral or ethical virtue is the product of habit (*ethos*), and has indeed derived its name, with a slight variation of form, from that word . . . The virtues [unlike natural faculties] we acquire by first actually having practised them, as we do the arts. . . for instance, men become builders by building houses, harpists by playing on the harp. Similarly we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts . . . In a word, our moral dispositions (*hexeis*) are formed as a result of the corresponding activities. Hence it is incumbent on us to control the character of our activities, since on the quality of these depends the quality of our dispositions. It is therefore not of small moment whether we are trained from childhood in one set of habits (*euthus*) or another; on the contrary it is of very great, or rather of supreme importance.' See also *Rhetoric* 1369 b 15: 'Things are the result of habit (*ethei*) when they are done because they have often been done'.
- 26 Aristotle, *On the Soul*, 417 a 23–b 2.
- 27 G.W. Leibniz, *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, ed. Leroy Loemker, 2nd edn (Boston: D. Riedel Publishing Co, 1969), p. 433.
- 28 'Nature itself: or, the inherent force and activity of created things' in *Philosophical Texts*, eds R. Woolhouse and R. Francks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 217.
- 29 Jean Beaufret, *Notes sur la philosophie en France au XIX^e siècle* (Paris: Vrin, 1984).
- 30 See Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, vol. IV, p. 178. Maine de Biran, for example, begins his book on habit by emphasizing the problems it presents to the philosopher, who, when he reflects on his own nature, 'remains still in the presence of habit, which continues to veil the composition and number of its products, as it first concealed even their existence' – see *The Influence of Habit on the Faculty of Thinking*, p. 48; similarly, Hegel, although he offers an interpretation of habit that, in articulating its ambivalence, is more nuanced than most, nevertheless remarks that 'habit blinds us to that on which our whole existence depends' – see *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), §268, Addition.
- 31 Félix Ravaisson, *Rapport sur la philosophie en France au XIX^{eme} siècle*, p. 300.
- 32 Jules Lachelier, *Œuvres* (Paris: Alcan, 1933), vol. I, p. 92.
- 33 Émile Boutroux, *The Contingency of the Laws of Nature*, trans. F. Rothwell (Chicago and London: Open Court, 1916), p. 192.
- 34 Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (London: Macmillan, 1911), p. 355.
- 35 Lovejoy, 'Some antecedents of the philosophy of Bergson: the conception of "Real Duration"', p. 471.
- 36 Henri Bergson, 'The life and work of Ravaisson', p. 275.
- 37 See Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, trans. F. L. Pogson (London: Sonnenschein, 1910), p. 166.

- 38 Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 134; see also pp. 183–4.
 39 See Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, p. 169.
 40 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 1962), p. 144.
 41 Paul Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, trans. Erazim V. Kohák (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966), p. 297. See also *Fallible Man*, trans. Charles Kelby (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1965), p. 88: ‘Habit fixes our tastes and aptitudes and thus shrinks our field of availability; the range of the possible narrows down; my life has taken shape. This is not to say that true habits are automatisms; on the contrary, the most flexible and interchangeable habits, those closest to systematic arrangement or method, best illustrate what Ravaisson called the return of freedom to nature. For it is precisely at the expense of the availability of these plastic habits which do not have the rigidity of mechanical systems that the counter-process of “sclerosis” develops. That is why our habits are very ambiguous; it is not by chance that they lend themselves to two opposing systems of interpretation, in terms of life which “learns” and life which “automatizes”, in terms of spontaneity and inertia’.
 41 Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, p. 307.

Of Habit

- 1 Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, II, 2: ‘by our often moving in a certain way a habit not innate in us is finally trained to be operative in that way, and this we do not observe in inanimate objects, for not even if you throw a stone upwards ten thousand times will it ever rise upward unless under the operation of force’.
- 2 See Leibniz, *passim* and particularly the *Theodicy*.
- 3 Virgil, *Georgics*, II, 49.
- 4 Bichat’s *organic life*, which considers such life only within the animal realm.
- 5 On the physiological character and rank of these functions (digestive, respiratory, excretive), see Buisson, *De la division la plus naturelle des phénomènes physiologiques considérés chez l’homme*. With this author, I consider these functions as forming the intermediary and the transition between Bichat’s *two lives*.
- 6 Xavier Bichat, *Physiological Researches on Life and Death*, art. IV. Cf. Aristotle, *On Sleep and Waking*.
- 7 Stahl, *Physiologia*, p. 298, in *Theoria medica vera*: ‘Concerning tonic motion, and particularly the dependent motion of blood, it is demonstrated that when the circulation is at rest, blood and its attendant humours flowing to a particular part of the body can be more fully directed and driven’ etc. (Jena, 1692, in-4°).

- 8 Richter, *De affectibus periodicis* (1702, in-4°); Rhetius, *De morbis habitualibus* (Halle, 1698, in-4°); Jung, *De consuetudinis efficacia generali in actibus vitalibus* (Halle, 1705, in-4°) – these are theses defended under Stahl's supervision. Cf. Barthez, *Nouveaux éléments de la science de l'homme*, XIII, I.
- 9 Stahl, *Physiologia*, p. 214: 'This is so true that it represents a stumbling-block for the frivolous opinions of the moderns, which assign materially similar causes to the same events'. Within the opposing doctrine of Cartesian mechanism, see, in particular, Buffon, *Discours sur la nature des animaux*, on the equality of action and reaction.
- 10 Cf. Aristotle, *On the Soul*, III, 6.
- 11 Aristotle, *Parts of Animals*, IV, 10; Maine de Biran, *passim*.
- 12 Cf. Aristotle, *On Memory and Recollection*, I: 'It is impossible even to think without some mental image. The thinker, though he may not be thinking of a finite magnitude, still puts a finite magnitude before his eyes, though he does not think of it as such'; *On the Soul*, III, 7, 8; Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* – 'On the schematism of the pure concepts of the understanding'; Stahl, *Negotium otiosum seu schiamachia* (Halle, 1720, in-4°); this is a defence of one of his doctrines in response to Leibniz, p. 169: 'It must be recognised that we cannot conceive or comprehend anything definitely, be it physical or moral, except in the guise of a *figurative example* . . . or in an imaginative representation'; p. 39: 'Soul, with whatever is being contemplated, thinks, remembers, pursues understanding under no other mode of comprehension than that of *shape* circumscribed by corporeal limits or *boundaries*'; p. 47: 'The fundamental difference between intuition (*logos*) and calculation (*logismou*) underlies all considerations; intuition is without a mental image (an example of which are the senses, in relation to their own proper objects) whilst calculation is thought with mental imagery, in which there is nothing incapable of figuration'; *Physiologia*, p. 297; Destutt de Tracy, *Éléments d'idéologie*, I, 173. cf. Maine de Biran, *The Influence of Habit on the Faculty of Thinking*, (1802, in-8°) p. 182.
- 13 Cf. Kant, *loc. cit.*
- 14 Aristotle, *loc. cit.*, Kant, *loc. cit.*
- 15 Kant, *ibid.*
- 16 Maine de Biran, *passim*. On the idea of *effort* as the primary source of knowledge, cf. Rey-Régis, *Histoire naturelle et raisonnée de l'âme*.
- 17 Maine de Biran, *The Influence of Habit on the Faculty of Thinking*, pp. 54ff.
- 18 *Ibid.*, pp. 59ff.
- 19 *Ibid.*
- 20 Cf. *ibid.* Some interesting investigations concerning the difference of sensation and perception can be found in Paffe's *Considérations sur la sensibilité* (1832, in-8°).
- 21 This is the question of the objectivity of *secondary qualities*.

- 22 Buffon, *Discours sur la nature des animaux*; Maine de Biran (*The Influence of Habit on the Faculty of Thinking*, p. 64) honours Bonatterre ('Historical Notice on the *sauvage de l'Aveyron*') with this correct and ingenious theory of the activity of hearing, when he had in fact only copied Buffon literally without giving notice of having done so.
- 23 Destutt de Tracy, *Éléments d'idéologie*, pp. 217, 226; Maine. de Biran, *The Influence of Habit on the Faculty of Thinking*, *passim*; Dugald Stewart, *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, II, 391; Joseph Butler, *The Analogy of Religion*, pp. 72–3; Bichat, *Physiological Researches* . . . , art. V; Schrader, *De consuetudine* (1829, in-8°), p. 6. Most of the authors who have examined habit have apprehended this law.
- 24 Matthieu Buisson, *De la division . . . des phénomènes physiologiques*, p. 71.
- 25 Maine de Biran, *The Influence of Habit on the Faculty of Thinking*, p. 97.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Thomas Reid, *Essay on the Active Powers of Man*.
- 28 Cf. Aristotle, *On the Soul*, II, 4, 33-4.
- 29 Ibid.; Chaussier, as cited by Buisson, *loc. cit.*, p. 232.
- 30 Cf. Paul-Joseph Barthez, *Nouveaux éléments de la science de l'homme*, XI, 2.
- 31 Cf. Christian Isaac, *De Consuetudine ejusque effectibus ex fibra sensim mutata ducendis* (Erfurt, 1737, in-4°).
- 32 See Charles Bonnet, *Essai de psychologie* (*Œuvres*, VIII), 82, 9; Stewart, *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, p. 175.
- 33 Berkeley, *Siris*, p. 123: 'it being evident, that what is done by rule must proceed from something that understands the rule; therefore, if not from the musician himself, from some other active intelligence, the same perhaps which governs bees and spiders, and moves the limbs of those who walk in their sleep'.
- 34 William Porterfield, *A treatise on the eye, the manner and phenomena of vision*, II, 17.
- 35 Saint Paul, Romans, 7.23: 'But then I find quite another law in my members which conflicts with the law of my thinking'.
- 36 Galen, *De motu musculorum*, II, 17.
- 37 Aristotle, *On Memory and Recollection*, 2.
- 38 Joan Baptist Van Helmont, *De morbis archealibus* (*Ortus medicinae*, Amsterdam, 1648, in-4°), p. 521, a: 'Indeed, I cannot grasp the means by which the seminal principles express their own virtues and their production; this is simply *a priori* unknown to me'.
- 39 Barthez, *Nouveaux éléments de la science de l'homme*, XIII, I.
- 40 Stahl, *De vera diversitate corporis mixti et vivi* (*Theoria medica vera*, pp. 78-79; *Negotium otiosum seu schiamachia*, p. 72).
- 41 [The note to which Ravaisson refers is absent from the English translation. See the Commentary for a translation of it.]

- 42 Van Helmont, *loc. cit.*, p. 521, b: 'But only the ideas of desire are guiding motives'.
- 43 See Barthez, *loc. cit.*, V, I, on muscular strength.
- 44 See Bichat, *Physiological Researches on Life and Death*, art. II ff.
- 45 Galen, *De sanitate tuenda*, V, 9; Hoffmann, *Medicina rationalis systematica*, II, XIV, 17; Hahn, *De consuetudine* (Leiden, 1751, in-4°), p. 72.
- 46 Hippocrates, *Aphorisms*, II, 50: 'Those things which one has been accustomed to for a long time, although worse than things which one is not accustomed to, usually give less disturbance; but a change must sometimes be made to things one is not accustomed to'; Wetzell, *De consuetudine circa rerum non naturalium usum* (Basle, 1730, in-4°); Jungnickel, *De consuetudine altera natura* (Wittenburg, 1787, in-4°), pp. 12ff.; Hahn, *De consuetudine*, II; Barthez, *loc. cit.*, XIII.
- 47 Erasistratus, *De paralysis*, II, as cited by Galen, *De consuetudine*, I, etc.
- 48 See Van Helmont, *De ideis morborum*, *De morbis archealibus*, etc; Barthez, *passim*; Thomas Sydenham (*Works*, init.) defines illness as the method by which nature expels the harmful principle. This definition also implies the *morbid idea*; but it should be understood *in concreto*, *eidos enhulos*; see Stahl, Van Helmont and Barthez on the effects of poisons, of contagious viruses and violent passions, which impress on the vital principle corresponding forms or *morbid ideas*.
- 49 Van Helmont, *De morbis archealibus*, p. 521, b.
- 50 Van Helmont, *De morbis archealibus*, p. 521, b, Burchart (supervised by Stahl), *De haereditaria dispositione ad varios affectus* (1706, in-4°); Jung, *De consuetudinis efficacia*, p. 13.
- 51 See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*.
- 52 Claude Perrault, *Des sens extérieurs* (*Œuvres*, 1721, in-4°), p. 547: 'Through the attention that it (the mind) has given to things in the first moments of life, it has acquired a perfect knowledge of their properties, and as a result of the prolonged use that it has made of them, it has become so inured to them that it no longer has any need to employ anything other than confused or lazy thoughts in relation to them' (see also p. 569).
- 53 This is the spirit and the letter of Stahlism, almost always misconceived and misunderstood by his adversaries, even by the wise and profound Barthez. See Stahl, *passim*, and principally *Negotium otiosum*; Scaliger, *Exotericarum exercitationum de subtilitate adversus Cardanum*, p. 987: 'Spirit makes teeth and horns for itself to preserve its own life; it uses them, in whatever manner they are used, without an object or any mental image'.
- 54 'Could one not conjecture that the repeated exercise of the same movements makes the parts themselves more mobile, more *irritable*, in converting them into *artificial* centres of forces, like vital organs, or those of cold-blooded

- animals, are their natural centres.' [This note is also missing from the English translation].
- 55 Johann Gottfried Herder, *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man* (1800), I, 143: 'The crystal shoots with more promptitude and regularity than the bee constructs its comb, or the spider her web. In the stone it is only a blind, organic instinct, which is infallible'.
 - 56 Plotinus, *Ennead*, I, 6: 'It is thus necessary to climb up towards the Good, towards which souls are inclined. . . . As Good, it is desired and desire inclines towards it'.
 - 57 Butler, *Analogy of Religion*; Stewart.
 - 58 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII, 9; IX, 7.
 - 59 Aristotle, *Politics*, VIII; *Nicomachean Ethics*, X, 10.
 - 60 Aristotle, *De anima*, III, 9: 'Further, neither can the calculative faculty or what is called "mind" be the cause of such movement; for mind as speculative never thinks what is practicable, it never says anything about an object to be avoided or pursued, while this movement is always in something which is avoiding or pursuing an object'; *ibid.*, 10: 'As it is, mind is never found producing movement without appetite'.
 - 61 François Fénelon, *Traité de l'existence de Dieu*, XCII; Saint Augustine, as cited by Fénelon, *ibid.*: 'More intimate to us than we are to ourselves'; Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, VII, 14: 'For in a sense the divine element in us is the cause of all our motions. And the starting-point of reason is not reason but something superior to reason. What, then, could be superior even to knowledge and to intellect, except God?'; Vico, *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians: Unearthed from the Origins of the Latin Language*, ch. 6: 'God is the first originator of all motions, whether of bodies or of spirits . . . Yet more, according to Holy Scripture, no one of us can go to the Father unless the same Father has drawn him'.
 - 62 On the habits of the mind, see particularly Maine de Biran, *The Influence of Habit on the Faculty of Thinking*.
 - 63 See above, II, I.
 - 64 As Dugald Stewart supposes to be the case (*Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, II, 14ff.) against Reid. The same applies to Hume and Hartley: Hume, in supposing a sort of attraction between ideas; Hartley, by means of the no less arbitrary hypothesis concerning vibrations of the nerves.
 - 65 Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, VIII, 14: 'For it is not the case that one only deliberates when one has deliberated even previously to that deliberation, nor does one only think when one has previously thought before thinking, and so on to infinity, but there is some starting-point; therefore thought is not the starting-point of thinking, nor deliberation of deliberating'. On this point, and on the character of *nature*, see the profound metaphysician Cesalpino, *Quaestionum peripateticarum*, II, 4.

- 66 On the opposition of *circumscriptive* knowledge and *constitutive* knowledge, see Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*.

De l'habitude

- 1 Aristote, *Eth. Eud.*, II, 2; 'Εθίζεται δὲ τὸ ὑπὲρ ἀγωγῆς μὴ ἐμφύτου τῷ πολλάκις κινεῖσθαι πῶς, οὕτως ἤδη τὸ ἐνεργητικόν, ὃ ἐν τοῖς ἀψυχοῖς οὐχ ὁρώμεν. Οὐδὲ γὰρ ἂν μυριάκις ῥίψῃς ἄνω τὸν λίθον, οὐδέποτε ποιήσει τοῦτο μὴ βίᾳ.
- 2 Voir Leibnitz, *passim*, et surtout *Théodicée*.
- 3 Virgile, *Georg.*, II, 49.
- 4 *La vie organique* de Bichat, qui ne la considère que dans l'animal.
- 5 Sur le caractère et le rang physiologique de ces fonctions (digestives, respiratrices, excrétoires), voir Buisson, *De la division la plus naturelle des phénomènes physiologiques*. Je les considère ici, avec cet auteur, comme formant l'intermédiaire et la transition entre les *deux vies* de Bichat.
- 6 Bichat, *Rech. sur la vie*, art. IV. Cf. Aristote, *De somno et vigil*.
- 7 Stahl, *Physiolog.*, p. 298, in *Theoria medica vera*. – De motu tonico, et inde pendente motu sanguinis particulari, quo demonstratur, stante circulatione, sanguinem et cum eo commeanantes humores ad quamlibet corporis partem, prae aliis, copiosius dirigi et propelli posse, etc. (Jenae, 1692, in-4°)
- 8 Richter, *De affectibus periodicis* (1702, in-4°). – Rhetius, *De morbis habitualibus* (Halae, 1698, in-4°). – Jung, *De consuetudinis efficacia generali in actibus vitalibus* (Halae, 1705, in-4°). – Ce sont des thèses soutenues sous la présidence de Stahl. – Cf. Barthéz, *Nouv. élém. de la science de l'homme*, XIII, I.
- 9 Stahl, *Physiolog.*, p. 214; «Adeo quidem ut in hoc maxime negotio impingat recentiorum inanis speculatio, dum paribus eventibus causas *materialiter* pares assignat, etc.» – Dans la doctrine contraire du mécanisme cartésien, voir spécialement sur l'égalité de l'action et de la réaction, Buffon, *De la Nature des animaux*.
- 10 Cf. Aristote, *De An.*, III, 6.
- 11 Aristote, *De Part. Anim.*, IV, 10. – Maine de Biran, *passim*.
- 12 Aristot., *De mem.*, I; Νοεῖν οὐκ ἔστιν ἀνευ φαντάσματος. Καὶ ὁ νοῶν ..., κἄν μὴ ποσὸν νοτίζεται πρὸ ὁμμάτων ποσόν, νοεῖ δ' οὐχ ἢ ποσόν. – *De an.*, III, 7, 8. – Kant, *Crit. de la rais. Pure*; *Du schématisme des concepts intellectuels purs*. Stahl, *Negotium otiosum, seu sciamaia* (Halae, 1720, in-4°; c'est une apologie de ses doctrines, en réponse à Leibnitz). P. 169; «Nihil quicquam, non solum physici, sed nequidem ullo sensu moralis mente concipi seu *definite* –comprehendi posse agnosco, nisi sub *exemplo figurabili* . . . seu imaginativa repraesentatione.» P. 39; «Anima, quicquid contemplatur, cogitat, reminiscitur, non sub alio concipiendi modo assequitur, quam sub *figurabili*, corporalibus *finibus* seu terminis circumscripto». P. 47; «Omnibus autem hisce considerationibus fundamentum substernit *differentia* λόγου et λογισμοῦ;

rationis absque *phantasia* (cujus exemplum sunt omnes sensus, in objectis suis simplicioribus) et *ratiocinationis*, seu *cogitationis* cum *phantasia*; cui nihil subjacet, nisi quod figurabile est.» – *Physiolog.*, p. 297. – Destutt de Tracy, *Elem. d'idéolog.*, I, 173. Cf. Maine de Biran, *Influence de l'habitude sur la faculté de penser* (1802, in-8°), p. 299.

- 13 Cf. Kant, *loc. cit.*
- 14 Aristote, *loc. cit.*, Kant, *loc. cit.*
- 15 Kant, *ibid.*
- 16 M. de Biran, *passim*. Sur l'idée de l'effort comme source première de la connaissance, cf. Rey Regis, *Histoire naturelle de l'âme*.
- 17 M. de Biran, *Infl. de l'habitude*. . . , p. 17 sqq.
- 18 M. de Biran, *Infl. de l'habitude*. . . , p. 27 sqq.
- 19 M. de Biran, *Infl. de l'habitude*. . . , p. 27 sqq.
- 20 Cf. *eumdem*, *ibidem*. On trouve des recherches intéressantes sur la différence de la sensation et de la perception, dans les *Considérations sur la sensibilité*, de M. Paffe (1832, in-8°).
- 21 C'est la question de l'objectivité des *Qualités secondes*.
- 22 Buffon, *De la nature des animaux*. – Maine de Biran (*Infl. de l'habit.*, p. 41) fait honneur de cette théorie juste et ingénieuse de l'activité de l'ouïe à Bonaterre (*Notice sur le sauvage de l'Aveyron*), qui n'a fait que copier littéralement Buffon, sans en avertir.
- 23 Destutt de Tracy, *Élém. d'idéol.*, p. 217, 226. – M. de Biran, *Infl. de l'habitude*, *passim*. – Cf. Dugald Stewart, *Philos. de l'espr. hum.*, II, 391. – Butler, *Analogie*, etc., p. 122, 149. – Bichat, *Rech. sur la vie*, art. V. – Schrader, *De consuetudine* (1829, in-8°), p. 6. – La plupart des auteurs qui ont traité de l'habitude ont aperçu cette loi.
- 24 Buisson, *De la divis. des phén. physiol.*, p. 71.
- 25 M. de Biran, *Infl. de l'habitude*. . . , p. 110.
- 26 M. de Biran, *Infl. de l'habitude*. . . , p. 110.
- 27 Reid, *Essai sur les facultés actives*, etc.
- 28 Aristot., *De an.*, II, 4:) Ἀπαθούς ὄντος τοῦ ὁμοίου ὑπὸ τοῦ ὁμοίου.
- 29 Id., *ibid.* – Chaussier, ap. Buisson, *loc. cit.*, p. 232.
- 30 Cf. Barthez, *Nouv. élém. de la science de l'homme*, XI, 2.
- 31 Cf. Isaac, *De consuetudine ejusque effectibus ex fibra sensim mutata ducendis* (Erfordia, 1737, in-4°).
- 32 Voir Bonnet, *Ess. de psychol.* (Œuvres, VIII), 82, 9. – Dug. Steward, *Philos. de l'espr. hum.*, p. 175.
- 33 Berkeley, *Siris*, p. 123: «. . . Puis donc que ce n'est pas du musicien lui-même que procèdent ces mouvements, il faut que ce soit de quelque autre intelligence active, peut-être est-ce de cette même intelligence qui gouverne les abeilles et les araignées, et qui meut les membres de ceux qui marchent en dormant.»

- 34 Porterfield, *Traité de l'œil*, II, 17.
- 35 Saint Paul, *Epist. ad Rom.*, VII, 23: Βλέπω δὲ ἕτερον νόμον ἐν τοῖς μέλεσί μου ἀντιστρατεύμενον τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ νοός μου.
- 36 Galen., *De motu muscul.*, II, 17; Ἐπίκτητος φύσις.
- 37 Aristot., *De Mem.*, 2.
- 38 Van Helmont, *De morbis archealibus* (*Ortus medicinae*, Amstelodami, 1648, in-4°), p. 521, a: «Non enim modum novi quo initia seminalia suas dotes exprimunt, qui plane ut a priori mihi ignotus est».
- 39 Cf. Barthez, *Nouv. élém. de la science de l'homme*, XIII, 1.
- 40 Stahl, *De vera diversitate corporis micti et vivi* (*Theoria medica vera*, p. 78-9; *Negot. otios.*, p. 72).
- 41 M. de Biran, *Infl. de l'habitude* . . ., p. 28, note.
- 42 Van Helmont, *loc. cit.*, p. 521, b: «Sunt autem ideae desiderii soloe directrices motivae».
- 43 Cf. Barthez, *Loc. cit.*, XIII, 1.
- 44 Bichat, *Recherches sur la vie*, art. II sqq.
- 45 Galen., *De sanit. tuenda*, V, 9. – Hoffmann, *Medic. Rat. Syst.*, II, XIV, 17. – Hahn, *De consuetudine* (*Lugd. Batav.*, 1731, in-4°), p. 72.
- 46 Hippocr., *Aphor.*, II, 50: Τὰ ἐκ πολλοῦ χρόνου συνήθεα, κὰν ἡ χεῖρω, τῶν ἀσυνήθων ἥσσον ἐνοχλεῖν εἴωθε.
Wetzel, *De consuet. circa rerum non naturalium usum* (Basileae, 1730, in-4°). – Jungnickel, *De Consuetudine altera natura* (Witt., 1787, in 4°), p. 12 sqq. – Hahn, *De consuet.*, II. – Barthez, *loc. cit.*, XIII.
- 47 Erasistr., *De paral.*, II, ap. Galen., *De consuet.*, I, etc.
- 48 Voir Van Helmont, *De ideis morboris, de morbis archealibus*, etc. – Barthez, *passim*. – Sydenham (*Opp.*, init.) définit la maladie: la méthode de la nature pour expulser le principe malfaisant. Cette définition implique également l'idée morbide; mais il faut prendre l'idée *in concreto*, εἶδος ἔνυλον. Voir Stahl, V. Helmont et Barthez sur les effets des poisons, des virus contagieux et des passions violentes qui impriment au principe vital des *formes* ou *idées mor-bides* correspondantes.
- 49 V. Helmont, *De morbis archealibus*, p. 521, b.
- 50 Id., *ibid.* – Burchart (praeside Stahlio), *De haereditaria dispositione ad varios affectus* (1706, in-4°). Jung, *De consuetudinis efficacia*, p. 13.
- 51 Kant, *Crit. de la rais. pure*.
- 52 Perrault, *Des sens extérieurs* (*Œuvres*, 1721, in-4°), p. 547: «Par l'attention qu'elle (l'âme) a donnée à toutes ces choses dans les premiers temps de la vie, elle a acquis une parfaite connaissance de toutes leurs propriétés, et, par le long usage qu'elle en a fait, elle se les est rendues tellement familières, qu'elle n'a plus besoin d'y employer que des pensées confuses ou négligées». Cf. p. 569.
- 53 C'est là l'esprit et la lettre du stahlianisme, presque toujours mal connu et mal compris de ses adversaires, même du savant et profond Barthez. – Voir

- Stahl, *passim*, et principalement *Negotium otiosum*. – Scaliger, *Exercit. exoter. adv. Card.*, p. 937: «Anima sibi fabricat dentes, cornua, ad vitam tuendam; iis utitur, et scit quo sit utendum modo, sine objecto aut phantasia ulla».
- 54 M. de Biran, *loc. cit.*, p. 124: «. . . Ne pourrait-on pas conjecturer que l'exercice répété des mêmes mouvements rend les parties mêmes plus mobiles, plus irritables, en les convertissant en foyers artificiels de forces, comme les organes vitaux, ou ceux des animaux à sang froid, en sont des foyers naturels?»
- 55 Herder, *Idées sur la philos. de l'hist.*, I, 143: «Le cristal se développe avec plus d'habileté et de régularité que n'en peut montrer l'abeille dans la construction de sa cellule, ou l'araignée dans le tissu de sa toile. Il n'y a dans la matière brute qu'un instinct aveugle, mais infailible.»
- 56 Plotin, *Ennead.*, I, 6: Ἀναβατέον οὖν πάλιν ἐπὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν πᾶσα ψυχὴ . . . Ἐφετὸν μὲν γὰρ ὡς ἀγαθόν, καὶ ἡ ἔφεσις πρὸς τοῦτο.
- 57 Butler, *Analogie*. – Dug. Stewart.
- 58 Aristote, *Eth. Nicom.*, VIII, 9; IX, 7.
- 59 Aristote, *Polit.*, VIII; *Eth. Nicom.*, X, 10.
- 60 Aristote, *De An.*, III, 9: Οὐδὲ τὸ λογιστικὸν καὶ ὁ καλούμενος νοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ κινῶν. – Ἔτι καὶ ἐπιτάττοντος τοῦ νοῦ καὶ λεγούσης τῆς διανοίας φεύγειν τι ἢ διώκειν, οὐ κινεῖται. Ibid., 10: Ὁ μὲν νοῦς οὐ φαίνεται κινῶν ἄνευ ὀρεξεως.
- 61 Fénelon, *De l'exist. de Dieu*, XCII; Saint Augustin, *Ap. eum.*, *ibid.*: «Intimior intimo nostro.» Aristote, *Eth. Eud.*, VII, 14: Κινεῖ γὰρ πῶς πάντα τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν θεῖον. Λόγου δ' ἄρχὴ οὐ λόγος ἀλλὰ τι κρεῖττον. Τί οὖν ἂν κρεῖττον καὶ ἐπιστήμης εἴποι [RITTER: εἴη], πλὴν θεός.
- Vico, *De l'ant. sag. de l'Ital.* (trad. Michelet), c. 6: «Dieu est le premier moteur de tous les mouvements, soit des corps, soit des âmes. – Comme nous l'enseignent la Sainte Écriture, nul de nous ne peut aller au Père, si le Père ne l'y traîne, etc.»
- 62 Sur les habitudes de l'esprit, voir surtout M. de Biran, *Influence de l'habitude sur la faculté de penser*.
- 63 Voir plus haut, II, I.
- 64 Comme le prétend Dug. Stewart (*Philos. de l'esprit hum.*, II, 14, sqq.) contre Reid. Hume et Hartley, de même; Hume, en supposant une sorte d'attraction entre les idées; Hartley, au moyen de l'hypothèse non moins arbitraire de l'enchaînement des vibrations des nerfs.
- 65 Aristote, *Eth. Eud.*, VIII, 14: Οὐ γὰρ ἐβουλεύσατο βουλευσάμενος, καὶ τοῦτ' ἐβουλεύσατο, ἀλλ' ἐστὶν ἀρχή, τις οὐδ' ἐνόησε νόησας πρότερον νοῆσαι, καὶ τοῦτο εἰς ἄπειρον. Οὐκ ἄρα τοῦ νοῆσαι ὁ νοῦς ἀρχή, οὐδὲ τοῦ βουλευσάσθαι βουλή.
- Voir sur ce point, comme aussi sur le caractère de la *nature*, le profond métaphysicien Cesalpini, *Quaest. peripatet.*, II, 4.

- 66 Sur l'opposition de la connaissance *circonscriptive* et de la connaissance *constitutive*, cf. Kant, *Crit. de la raison pure*.

Editor's Commentary

- 1 Leibniz, *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, p. 433.
- 2 See the section entitled 'Ravaisson's metaphysics' in the Editors' Introduction, pp. 12–15, for discussion of Ravaisson's appropriation of Aristotle.
- 3 'Nature itself: or, the inherent force and activity of created things' in Leibniz, *Philosophical Texts*, p. 217.
- 4 Ibid., p. 216.
- 5 Ravaisson, *La philosophie en France au XIX^{ème} siècle*, p. 303.
- 6 The first lines of Bichat's text are instructive in relation to this and to the following section of Ravaisson's essay: 'In more abstract considerations the definition of life is often sought; it will be found, I think, in this general insight: *la vie est l'ensemble des fonctions qui résistent à la mort* . . . The mode of existence of living bodies is such that all that surrounds them tends to destroy them. Inorganic bodies permanently act upon them; they exert a continual action on each other; they would soon succumb if they did not have in them a permanent principle of reaction. This principle is that of life; unknown in its nature, it can only be appreciated by its phenomena; but the most general of these phenomena is the continuous alternation of action on the part of external bodies, and reaction by the living body, an opposition whose proportions vary according to its age'. See Bichat, *Physiological Researches on Life and Death*, pp. 9–10.
- 7 Maine de Biran, *The Influence of Habit on the Faculty of Thinking*, p. 219.
- 8 Félix Ravaisson, 'La philosophie contemporaine: fragments de philosophie par M. Hamilton' in *Métaphysique et morale*, ed. J-M. Le Lannou (Paris: Vrin, 1986), p. 24.
- 9 Maine de Biran, *The Influence of Habit on the Faculty of Thinking*, p. 52.
- 10 In his article 'Some antecedents of the philosophy of Bergson: the concept of "Real Duration"', Lovejoy claims that in this way 'Ravaisson has led us back to the Kantian Ego, to the "Synthetic Unity of Self-Consciousness"; and he has led us thereto, though at a strangely accelerated pace, over a familiar Kantian road' (p. 470).
- 11 Maine de Biran, *The Influence of Habit on the Faculty of Thinking*, p. 58.
- 12 The sixth sense discussed by Maine de Biran relates to 'the impressions internal to the body . . . which might be called *pure sensations*'. See *ibid.*, p. 67.
- 13 See *ibid.*, pp. 57–61.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 59.
- 15 See *ibid.*, pp. 63–5.
- 16 Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 37.
- 17 Bergson, 'The life and work of Félix Ravaisson', p. 275.

- 18 Ravaisson's description of the immediacy formed by habit can be compared to Hegel's: 'Habit is rightly called a second nature; nature, because it is an immediate being of the soul; a second nature, because it is an immediacy created by the soul, impressing and moulding the corporeality which enters into the modes of feeling as such and into the representations and volitions so far as they have taken corporeal form', Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind, Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (1830), §410.
- 19 Augustine, *Confessions*, Book VIII, Section 5.
- 20 This footnote is not included in the English translation. For the discussion of effort and will, see Maine de Biran, *Influence de l'habitude sur la faculté de penser*, p. 138.
- 21 Ibid., p. 91.
- 22 See Walter Pagel, *Joan Baptista Van Helmont: Reformer of Science and Medicine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1982), particularly Chapter 5, 'The ontological conception of disease', pp. 141–98.
- 23 *Nichomachean Ethics* IX, 7.
- 24 Ravaisson, *La philosophie en France au XIX^{ème} siècle*, p. 320.
- 25 Hume, *A Treatise on Human Nature*, p. 10.
- 26 Ibid., p. 11.
- 27 Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, p. 43.
- 28 Ravaisson, *La philosophie en France au XIX^{ème} siècle*, p. 218.

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